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ORIGINAL LETTERS

OF

THE LATE REVEREND

MR. LAURENCE STERNE.



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MR. LAURENCE STERNE;

— 1c

NEVER BEFORE PUBLISHED.

D U B L I N :

Printed for Messrs. H. CHAMBERLAINE, W. COLLES,
W. GILBERT, P. BYRNE, P. WOGAN,
W. PORTER, W. M'KENZIE,
J. MOORE, J. JONES,
and B. DORNIN.

1788.

ORIGINAL LETTERS

MR. LAURENCE STEPHENS



THE HON. THE SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR THE COLONIES
AND THE WEST INDIES
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WESTMINSTER, LONDON, W.C.

LETTERS

OF THE LATE

Mr. LAURENCE STERNE.

To W. C. Esq.

Coxwold, July 1, 1764.

I Am safe arrived at my bower—and
I trust that you have no longer any
doubt about coming to embower it with
me. Having, for six months together,
been running at the ring of pleasure, you
will find that repose here which, all young

B

as

as you are, you ought to want. We will be witty, or classical, or sentimental, as it shall please you best. My milk-maids shall weave you garlands; and every day after coffee I will take you to pay a visit to my nuns. Do not, however, indulge your fancy beyond measure, but rather let me indulge mine, or, at least, let me give you the history of it, and the fair sisterhood who dwell in one of its visionary corners. Now, what is all this about? you'll say—have a few moments patience, and I will tell you.

You must know then, that, on passing out of my back door, I very soon gain a path, which, after conducting me through several verdant meadows and shady thickets, brings me, in about twenty minutes, to the ruins of a monastery, where, in

times long past, a certain number of cloistered females had devoted their—lives— I scarce know what I was going to write—to religious solitude.—This saunter of mine, when I take it, I call *paying a visit to my nuns.*

It is an awful spot—a rivulet flows by it, and a lofty bank, covered with wood, that rises abruptly on the opposite side, gives a gloom to the whole, and forbids the thoughts, if they were ever so disposed, from wandering away from the place. Solitary sanctity never found a nook more appropriated to her nature!—It is a place for an antiquary to sojourn in for a month—and examine with all the spirit of rusty research. But I am no antiquary, as you well know——and, therefore, I come
here

here upon a different and a better errand—that is—to examine myself.

So I lean, lackadayfically, over a gate, and look at the passing stream—and forgive the spleen, the gout, and the envy of a malicious world. And, after having taken a stroll beneath mouldering arches, I summon the sifterhood together, and take the fairest among them, and sit down with her on a stone beneath a bunch of alders—and do—what? you'll say—why I examine her gentle heart, and see how it is attuned; I then guess at her wishes, and play with the cross that hangs at her bosom—in short—I make love to her.

Fie, for shame! Tristram—that is not as it ought to be:—Now I declare, on the contrary, that it is exactly what it ought

ought to be; for, though philosophers may say, among the many other foolish things philosophers have said, that a man who is in love is not in his right senses—I do assert, in opposition to all their saws and see-saws, that he is never in his right senses, or I would rather say his right sentiments, but when he is pursuing some *Dulcinea* or other. If that should be the case with you at this moment, I will forgive your staying from me; but if this letter should find you at the instant when your last flame is blown out, and before a new one is lighted up, and you should not take post and come to me and my nuns, I will abuse you in their name and my own, to the end of the chapter—though I believe, after all, at the end of the chapter, I should feel myself
affectionately your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTERS OF THE LATE

LETTER II.

Coxwold, July 17, 1764.

AND so you have been at the seats of the learned.—If I could have guessed at such an intention, I would have contrived that something in an epistolary shape should have met you there, with half a dozen lines recommending you to the care of the *Master of Jesus*.—He was my tutor when I was at college, and a very good kind of man. He used to let me have my way, when I was under his direction, and that shewed his sense, for I was born to travel

travel out of the common road, and to get aside from the highway path, and he had sense enough to see it, and not to trouble me with trammels. I was neither made to be a *thill-horse*, nor a *fore-horse*; in short I was not made to go in a *team*, but to amble along as I liked; and so that I do not kick, or splash, or run over any one, who in the name of common sense has a right to interrupt me?—Let the good folks laugh if they will, and much good may it do them. Indeed, I am persuaded, and I think I could prove, nay, and I would do it, if I were writing a book instead of a letter, the truth of what I once told a very great statesman, orator, politician, and as much more as you please—that every time a man smiles—much more so—when he laughs—it adds something to the fragment of life.

But

But the staying five days at Cambridge does not come within the immediate reach of my crazy comprehension, and you might have employed your time much, much better, in urging your mettlesome tits towards Cox would.

I may suppose that you have been picking a hole in the skirts of Gibb's cumbersome architecture, or measuring the façade of Trinity College Library, or peering about the gothic perfections of King's College Chapel, or, which was doing a better thing, sipping tea and talking sentimentally with the Miss Cookes, or disturbing Mr. Gray with one of your enthusiastic visits—I say *disturbing* him, for with all your own agreeableness, and all your admiration of him, he would rather have your room than your company. But mark
me,

me, I do not say this to his glory, but to his shame. For I would be content with any room, so I had your company.

But tell me, I beseech you, what you did with *S*—all this time. The looking at the heavy walls of muzzing Colleges, and gazing at the mouldy pictures of their founders, is not altogether in his way; nor did he wander where I have whilom wandered, on Cam's all verdant banks with willows crowned, and call the muse: Alas, he'd rather call a waiter—and how such a milkop as you could travel—I mean be suffered to travel, two leagues in the same chaise with him, I know not—but from that admirable and kind pliability of spirit which you possess whenever you please, but which you do not always please to possess. I do not mean.

that a man should wear a court dress when he is going to a puppet show ; but, on the other hand, to keep the best suit of embroidery for those only whom he loves, though there is something noble in it, will never do. The world, my dear friend, will not let it do. For while there are such qualities in the human mind as ingratitude and duplicity, unlimited confidence and this patriotism of friendship, which I have heard you rave and rant about is a very dangerous business.

I could preach a sermon on the subject—to say the truth, I am got as grave as if I were in my pulpit. Thus are the projects of this life destroyed. When I took up my pen, my humour was gay, frisky, and fanciful—and now I am sliding into all the fee-faw gravity of solemn councils.

I want

I want nothing but an ass to look over my pales and set up a braying to keep me in countenance.

Leave, leave your Lincolnshire seats, and come to my dale; S——, I know, is heartily tired of you. Besides I want a nurse, for I am not quite well, and have taken to milk-coffee. Remember me, however, to him kindly, and to yourself cordially, for

I am yours, most truly,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R III.

To W. C. Esq.

Coxwold, Aug. 5, 1764.

AND so you sit in S——'s temple and drink tea, and converse classically :— now I should like to know what is the nature of this disorder which you call classically ;—if it consists in a rage to converse on ancient subjects in a modern manner ; or on modern subjects in an antient one ;— or are you both out of your senses, and do you fancy yourselves with Virgil and Horace at Sinuessæ, or with Tully and Atticus at Tusculum? Oh how it would delight

light me to peep at you from behind a laurel bush, and see you surrounded with columns and covered by a dome, quaffing the extract of a Chinese weed, and talking of men who boasted the inspiration of the Falernian grape!

What a couple of vapid, inert beings you must be!—I should really give you up for lost, if it were not for the confidence I have in the reinvigorating powers of my society, to which you must now have immediate recourse, if you wish for a restoration. Make haste then, my good friend, and seek the aid of your physician ere it be too late.

You know not the interest I take in your welfare. Have I not ordered all the linen to be taken out of the press, and re-washed

washed before it was dirty, that you may have a clean table cloth every day, with a napkin into the bargain? And have I not ordered a kind of windmill, that makes my head ach again with its clatter, to be placed in my fine cherry-tree, that the fruit may be preserved from the birds, to furnish you a dessert? And do you not know that you will have curds and cream for your supper? Think on these things, and let S——go to Lincoln sessions by himself, and talk classically with country justices. In the meantime we will philosophize and sentimentalize;—the last word is a bright invention of the moment in which it was written, for yours or Dr. Johnson's service,—and you shall sit in my study and take a peep into the world as into a show-box, and amuse yourself as I present the pictures of it to your imagination.

nation. Thus will I teach you to laugh at its follies, to pity its errors, and despise its injustice;—and I will introduce you, among the rest, to some tender-hearted damsel, on whose cheeks some bitter affliction has placed a tear;—and having heard her story, you shall take a white handkerchief from your pocket to wipe the moisture from her eyes, and from your own:—and then you shall go to bed, not to the damsel, but with an heart conscious of those sentiments, and possessed of those feelings, which will give softness to your pillow, sweetness to your slumbers, and gladness to your waking moments.

You shall sit in my porch, and laugh at attic vestibules. I love the classics as well as any man ought to love them,—but among all their fine sayings, their fine writings,

tings, and their fine verses, their most enthusiastic admirer would not be able to find me half a dozen stories that have any sentiment in them,—and so much for that.

If you don't come soon, I shall set about another volume of Tristram without you. So God bless you, for

I am your's most truly,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R IV.

To _____

*Coxwold, near Easingwold,**August 8, 1764.*

I AM grieved for your downfall, though it was only out of a park-chair—May it be the last you will receive in this world; though, while I write this with, my heart heaves a deep sigh, and I believe it will not be read by you, my friend, without a similar accompaniment.

Alas! alas! my dear boy, you are born with talents to soar aloft with; but you have an heart, which, my apprehensions tell

tell me, will keep you low.—I do not mean, you know I do not, any thing base or grovelling;—but, instead of winging your way above the storm, I am afraid that you will calmly submit to its rigours, and house yourself afterwards in some humble shed, and there live contented, and chaunt away the time, and be lost to the world.

How the wind blows I know not; and I have not an inclination to walk to my window, where, perhaps, I might catch the course of a cloud and be satisfied,—but here I am up to my knees—I should rather say up to my heart, in a subject, which is ever accompanied with some afflicting vaticination or other. I am not afraid of your doing any wrong but to yourself. A secret knowledge of some
cir-

circumstances which you have never communicated to me, have alarmed my affection for you—not from any immediate harm they can produce, but from the conviction they have forced upon me, concerning your disposition, and the nicer parts of your character. If you do not come soon to me, I shall take the wings of some fine morning and fly to you; but I should rather have you here; for I wish to have you alone; and if you will let me be a *Mentor* to you for one little month, I will be content—and you shall be a *Mentor* to me the rest of the year; or, if you will, the rest of my days.

I long, most anxiously, my dear friend, to teach you—not to give an opiate to those sensibilities of your nature, which make me love you as I do; nor to check
your

your glowing fancy, that gives such grace to polish'd youth; nor to yield the beverage of the fountain for the nectar of the cask; but to use the world no better, or to please you a very little better, than it deserves.—But think not, I beseech you, that I would introduce my young *Telemachus* to such a foul and squint-eyed piece of pollution as Suspicion. Avaunt to such a base ungenerous passion! I would sooner carry you to *Calypso* at once, and give you at least a little pleasure for your pains. But there is a certain little spot to be found somewhere in the mid-way between trusting every body and trusting nobody; and so well am I acquainted with the longitudes, latitudes, and bearings of this world of ours, that I could put my finger upon it, and direct you at once to it; and I think I could give you so many good reasons

reasons why you should go there, that you would not hesitate to set off immediately, and I would accompany you thither, and serve as a *Cicerone* to you. I wish therefore much, very much, to talk with you about that and other serious matters.

As for your bodily infirmity, never mind it; you may come here by gentle stages, and without inconvenience; and I will be your surgeon, or your nurse: and warm your verjuice every evening, and bathe your sprain with it, and talk of these things. So tell me, I pray you, the day that I am to meet you at York. In the mean time, and always, may a good Providence protect you—It is the sincere wish of

Your affectionate,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER V.

To W. C——. Esq.

Wed: 5th Morning.

THIS letter will meet you at Hew-
it's, instead of myself; for I have taken
some how or other, and I know not how,
a very violent cold, and cannot come; and
as I would receive you with my best looks,
if possible, as well as my best welcome,
I am nursing myself into some sort of res-
toration against your arrival; though my
cough torments me without mercy, and
I am so hoarse at this moment, that I can
scarce make myself heard across my table.

This

This phthisic of mine will sooner or later, and, perhaps, sooner than either I or you, my friend, may think, bear me to my last asylum from a splenetic world. You will say, perhaps, that I am splenetic also in my turn by writing thus *gravely*;—but as I well know this vile cough is the engine which that scare-crow death employs to shatter my poor frame, and bring it to his dominion, how can I be merry or satisfied?—It is true, I love laughing and merry-making, and all that, as well as any soul upon earth; nevertheless, I cannot think of piping and taboring it out of the world, like the figures in *Holbein's dance*. Besides, I have been so used to my own way, that I don't like to be put out of it, by being made to cough so villainously as I do, more than half my time. It is most inurbane in him,—by Heaven, it is cowardly

ardly in the rascal, to rob me of those spirits, with which I have so often defeated him.

And this is not all,—for I have forty volumes more to write; nay, and have absolutely promised the world to do it; and I have my engagements to you as well as to the world—and to myself as well as to you both; and how shall I keep my word as an author and a gentleman, and what is of more consequence than either—as a friend,—if I cannot shake off this piece of anatomy? Besides, no one can do these things for me but myself; the business is beyond all power of attorney; for if I were to leave fifty executors to my last will and testament, and if they were to be joined by a regiment of administrators and assigns

signs, they could not take up their pens and do as I would do.

But what a wayward fancy mine is!—and with what a seducing pen am I writing—for I am got leagues without number from the idea which danced before me, when I first began this letter. And here I am wrong again:—for what great distance can there be between the grave of my grandfather and my own; and it was to his tomb that I wished to conduct you!

I know full well, that all sprained as your ankle may be, it will be wholly impossible for you to pass through York, without popping your head into its cathedral, and indulging your mind with a few of those reflections which such a building is calculated to inspire. Now, when you

C

are

are there, tell a verger to conduct you to the tomb of Archbishop Sterne. He is the same whose picture you saw at Cambridge, and which you were pleased to say, bore so strong a resemblance to me. In the marble whole length figure which dignifies the monument, you will find the likeness still stronger: and if I drop in this corner of the world, I should like to be deposited in that corner of the church, and sleep out my last sleep beside my pious ancestor.

He was an excellent prelate and an honest man:—I have not half his virtues, if report speaks true of us both, which, for his sake, I hope it does—and for my own, I hope it does not. Though, to use an expression which dropped from the lips and at the table of a brother *Arch* prelate
of

of his, and one of his successors, " My ideas are sometimes rather too *disorderly* for a man *in orders*." In his Grace's *Concio ad clerum*, I do not find myself a very principal figure, but in his private hours, he is always most cordial to me.

The day after to-morrow, I shall hope to embrace you at my gate ; till then, my dear friend, may God bless you—and always.

Your's, most affectionately,

L. STERNE.

L E T T E R VI.

To _____

Coxwold, Monday Morning.

I SHALL forgive the tardiness of your passage hither, if it be true, as a still small voice of a York gossip has informed me, that you repose, with your infirm limb, on a sofa, in Mrs. ———'s withdrawing room, and have your coffee and tea handed you by her two daughters, and one of them has charms enough for the three Graces—and that they play on their harpsichord, and, with voices stolen from heaven, sing duets to you, while you, stretched on damask,

mask, command, as it were, that little world of beauty and good sense which surrounds you.

You cannot, my good friend, have known the charming people, with whom you are so happy, more than eight and forty hours at most. Now I make this observation, merely to have the pleasure of making another, which is, that you have learned the art, and a very comfortable one it is, of setting yourself at ease with worthy spirits, when you have the good fortune to meet them. Indeed, I may claim the credit of having taught you the maxim, that life is too short to be long in forming the tender and happy connections of it. 'Tis a miserable waste of time, as well as a very base business, to be looking at each other, as an usurer looks at a security,

rity, to find a flaw in it. No:—if you meet a heart worth being admitted into, and you really feel yourself worthy of admission, the matter is arranged in five hours, as well as five years.

Hail, ye gentle sympathies, that can approach two amiable hearts to each other, and chase every discordant idea from an union that nature has designed by the same happy colouring of character that she has given them!—But *lucus a non lucendo*—I have received a kind of *dish dash* sort of letter from Garrick—out of which all my chemistry cannot extract a sympathetic atom. I am glad, however, to have an opportunity of writing a short answer to him, that I may address a long postscript to his *cara sposa*.

I love

I love Garrick on the stage, better than any thing in the world, *except Mrs. Garrick off it*; and if there is any one heart in the world I should like to get a corner of—it would be hers. But I am too great a sinner to do more than approach the portal of so much excellence—there to bend one knee at least, and ejaculate at a distance from the altar.

I have often thought on what this spirit of idolatry, which is continually bearing me to the feet of some fair image or other, will do with me twenty years hence; and whether, after having had, during my younger days, a damsel to smooth my pillow—I should find one, in my age, to put on my slipper. However, I need not trouble myself or you about these conjectures;
for

for I well know there is not life in me to make the experiment.

This instant brings me a letter from your kind hostess, who is determined not to let you go till I come to fetch you.—Tomorrow, by noon, therefore, I shall embrace you, and her—and—the damsels.

I am, most cordially yours,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R VII.

To _____, Esq.

Crazy Castle.

THOUGH I hope and trust you believe that I am not only disposed to laugh with those who laugh, but to weep with those who weep;—yet it is most true, my dear friend, that I could not but smile as I read the account you sent me of your distress and disappointment; and when I gave your letter to *Hall*, for you see I am at *Crazy Castle*, he laughed the tears into his eyes.

C. 5

Now

Now you must not suppose, nor can you imagine, that either of us trifled with your sufferings, for you know I love you, and *Hall* says you are a lad of promise; but we were merry at the amiable simplicity of your nature, in wondering that there is ever any villainy in a villainous world; and at the idea, how little a time you were destined to possess that delicious—for I will call it with all its scrapes and duperies, a delicious sentiment. You have just opened the volume of life, and startle to find a blot in the first page; alas! alas! as you proceed, you will find whole pages so blotted and blurred, that you will scarce be able to distinguish the characters. 'Tis a sorry business I must confess, to plant suspicion in a breast that has never known it, and to check the glow of hope which animates the beginning of the journey, by pointing out

the interruptions and dangers that will be necessarily encountered in the course of it : But this is the duty of friendship, and arises from the nature of our existence and the state of the world. If, however, after all, you can acquire an useful experience, and be taught to put yourself on your guard, at the expence of a few score guineas, you have made a good bargain :—so be content, and no more of your complainings.

But you will tell me, perhaps that it is not the matter of the loss, but the manner of it, that you consider as a misfortune : The being treated so ill, and with so much ingratitude, is the business that afflicts you. *Hall*, who is still laughing, bids me tell you for your comfort, that he who *dupe*s must be a *rascal*; and he who is duped
may

may be an *honest man*; but he is a *cynic*, and administers his dose in his own way. Now, was I to console you in mine, I should tell you, that gratitude is not so common a virtue in the world as it ought to be, for all our sakes: but ingratitude, my dear friend, is not an offspring of the present moment; it seems to have existed from the beginning, and will continue to disgrace the world when we have long been in the valley of Jehosaphat:—nay, you must have read—indeed I know that I have written a sermon upon the subject—that of the lepers who were healed, but *one* returned to give thanks for his restoration. I do not, however, tell you these things that you may find consolation in the miserable habits of mankind, but that you may not suppose yourself worse used than the rest of the world, which is very common with
young

young men like yourself, who feel at every pore, and have not yet had that collision with untoward circumstances which awakens caution, or begets patience.

And so much for you and your miseries, which I doubt not will have been dissipated by the bewitching smiles of some fair damsel or other, before my grave see-saw letter shall reach you. Let me know, I beg of you, your plan of operations for the winter, if you have one. You may, I think—though you may think otherwise—fly from the joys and damps of this ungenial climate, and winter serenely with me in Languedoc; your company would do me good, and mine would do you no harm:—at least I think so; and we shall return to London time enough to peep in at Ranelagh, and look at the birth-day. In short,

short, write to me upon the subject, and direct to me here, for here I am to be during this shooting month of September; so God bless you, and give you patience if you want it.

I remain,

Your's, most cordially,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R VIII.

To W——C——. Esq.

Coxwold, June 11, 1765.

SO *Burton* * really told you with a grave face, and an apparent mortification, that I had ridiculed my Irish friends at Bath for an hour together, and had made a large company merry at *Lady Lepel's* † table during an whole afternoon at their expence. By heaven's 'tis false as misrepresentation can make it. It is not in my nature, I trust, to be so ungrateful, as I should be, if absent or present, I were to
be

* The late amiable and excellent Lord Conyngham.

† The late Lady Mulgrave.

be ungracious to them. That I should make *Burton* look grave, whose countenance is formed to mark the smiles of an amiable and an honest heart, is not within my chapter of possibilities :—I am sure it is not in that of my intentions to say any thing that is inurbane of such a man as he is—for, in my life, did I never communicate with a gentleman of qualities more winning, and dispositions more generous. He invited me to his house with kindness, and he gave me a truly graceful welcome; for it was with all his heart. He is as much formed to make society pleasant as any one I ever saw; and I wish he were as rich as Cræsus, that he might do all the good an unbounded generosity would lead him to do. I never passed more pleasant hours in my life than with him and his fair coun-

countrywoman; and foul befall the man who should let drop a word in dispraise of him or them!—And there is the charming widow *Moor*, where, if I had not a piece of legal meadow of my own, I should rejoice to batten the rest of my days;—and the gentle elegant *Gore*, with her fine form and Grecian face, and whose lot I trust it will be to make some man happy, who knows the value of a tender heart:—Nor shall I forget another widow, the interesting Mrs. Vesey, with her vocal, and fifty other accomplishments.—I abuse them!—it must not be told,—for it is false,—and it should not be believed, for it is unnatural.—It is true I did talk of them, for an hour together, but no sarcasm or unlucky fallies mingled with my speech:—Yes, I did talk of them as they would
with

wish to be talked of,—with smiles on my countenance, praise on my tongue, hilarity in my heart, and the goblet in my hand.—Besides, I am myself of their own country :—My father was a considerable time on duty with his regiment in Ireland ; and my mother gave me to the world when she was there, on duty with him. I beg of you, therefore, to make all these good people believe that I have been at least misunderstood, for it is impossible that *Lady Barrymore* could mean to misrepresent me.

Read *Burton* this letter if you have an opportunity, and assure him of my most cordial esteem and respect for him and all his social excellencies : and whisper something kind and gentle for me, as you well know

know how, to my fair countrywomen; and let not an unmerited prejudice or displeasure against me remain any longer in their tender bosoms.—When you get into disgrace of any kind, be assured that I will do as much for you.

I am here as idle as ease of heart can make me :—I shall wait for you till the beginning of next month ; when, if you do not come, I shall proceed to while away the rest of the summer at *Crazy Castle* and *Scarborough*. In the beginning, the very beginning of October, I mean to arrive in Bond-street with my *Sermons* ; and when I have arranged their publication, then—hey go mad for Italy—whither you would do well to accompany me.—In the mean time, however, I hope, and wish to see you

you here; it will after all, be much better than playing the *Strephon* with phthifical nymphs at the Bristol Fountain. But do as you may—

I am,

Most sincerely your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER IX.

To_____.

I DID not answer your letter as you desired me, for at the moment I received it, I really thought all my projects, for some time to come, were *burned* to a *cinder*; or, which is the better expression of the two, had evaporated in smoke;—for, not half an hour before an affrighted messenger, on a breathless horse, had arrived to acquaint me, that the parsonage house at _____ was on fire, when he came away, and burning like a bundle of faggots; and
while

while I was preparing to set off to see my house, after it was burned down, your letter arrived to console me on my way; for it gave me every assurance that if I were left without any hole to put my head into, or a rag to cover my —— body, you would give me a comfortable room in your house, and a clean shirt into the bargain.

In short, by the carelessness of my curate, or his wife, or some one within his gates, I am an house out of pocket—I say, literally, out of pocket; for I must rebuild it at my own cost and charges, or the church of York, who originally gave it me, will do those things, which in good sense ought not to be done; but which the wise-acres who compose it, will tell me they have a right to do. My loss will be upwards of two hundred pounds, with
some

some books, &c. &c.—so that you may now lay aside all your apprehensions about what I shall do with the wealth that my sermons have brought, and are to bring to me.—I told you *then* that some devilish accident or other would provide me with the ends of getting rid of the means; and I had a cross accident in my head at the time, which I did not communicate to you; but it is not that which has fallen out, nor any thing like it;—though this may fall out too, for aught I know, and then the fee simple of my sermons will be gone for ever.

Now these sermons of mine, were most of them written in the very house that is burned down, and all of them preached, I fear again and again, in the very church to which it belonged; and they now answer

swer a purpose I never dreamed or thought of; but so it is in this world, and thus are things hinged and hung together—or rather unhinged or unhung; for I have my doubts at present, whether we shall see the dying gladiator next winter. The matter, however, that concerns me most in the business, is the strange unaccountable conduct of my poor unfortunate curate, not in *setting fire* to the house, for I do not accuse him of it, God knows, nor any one else; but in *setting off* the moment after it happened, and flying like *Paul* to *Tarsus*, through fear of a prosecution from me.

That the man should have formed such an idea of me, as to suppose me capable, if I did not sooth his sorrows, of adding another to their number, wounded me fore-ly.

ly. For, amidst all my errors and follies, I do not believe there is any thing, in the colour or complexion of any part of my life, that would justify the shadow of such an apprehension.—Besides, he deprived me of all the comfort I made out to myself from the misfortune; which was, as it pleased Heaven to deprive him of one house, to take him and his wife and his little one, into another—I mean into that where I lived myself. And he who now reads my heart, and will one day judge me for the secrets of it—he well knows that it did not grow cold within me, on account of the accident, till I was informed that this silly man was a fugitive, from the fear of my wrath.

The family of the C——s were kind to me beyond measure, as they have al-

D

ways

ways been. They are a sort of people that you would like extremely ; and before the summer is past, I hope to present you to them. Though, if I recollect aright, you know the charming damsel of the house already ; and the rest of it, though not so young or so fair, are as amiable as she is—As I cannot leave you in possession of a better subject for your reflection, &c. I shall say adieu, and God bless you.—In a few days you shall hear again from

Your affectionate and faithful

L. STERNE.

I write this from York—where you may write to me.

LETTER

L E T T E R X.

To _____, Esq.

I HAVE received, my dear friend, your kind answer to my letter. And you must know that it was just such an one as I wished to receive from you: Nay, it was just such an one as I expected you would write to me. I should have been disappointed if it had been in any other form or shape of friendship. But understand me, if you please; I should have been disappointed for your sake, and not for my own: for though I am charmed that you should have made me those unreserved offers of friendship, which are so gra-

cious in you, I am almost as much pleased that my Exchequer is in that state of sufficiency as not to require them.

I have made my bargain for rebuilding my parsonage, and settled all arrangements with all parties concerned, in a manner more to my satisfaction than I could have expected. I was rather in haste to settle this account, that there might be no risque of leaving my wife and Lydia a dilapidation for their fortune : for I have no reason to believe that the *** of *** would be more kind to them when friendless and unprotected, than they had been to the husband of the one, and the father of the other, who when he was a poor Curate, had pride enough to despise their Reverences, and wit enough to make others

others laugh at them. But may God forgive them, as I do!—Amen.

I wrote to *Hall* an account of my disaster;—and his answer bid me find out a *conceit* on the occasion, and comfort myself with it. *Tully*, the Orator, the Politician, the Philosopher, the Moralist, the Consul, &c. &c. &c. adopted, as he candidly tells every one, who reads his works, this mode of consolation, when he lost his daughter; and, if we may believe him, with success. Now this same *Tully*, you must know, was like my father; I mean *Mr. Shandy*, of *Shandy Hall*, who was as well pleased with a misfortune that gave him an opportunity of displaying his eloquence, as with a *blessing* that obliged him to hold his tongue. Both these great men were fond of conceits, I mean their own; so I will tell you a story of
of

of a *Conceit*, not of Cicero's nor my Father's, but of the Lord of *Crazy*.

You must know then, that this same friend of mine, and I may add, of your's also, in a moment of lazy pride, took it into his head that he would have a town chariot, to save his feet by day, and to carry him to Ranelagh in the evening. For this purpose, after consulting a coach-maker, he had allotted *one hundred and forty pounds*; and he wrote me word of it. On my arrival in town, about three months after this communication, I found a card of invitation from *Lord Spencer* to dine with him on the following Sunday; and I had no sooner read it, than *Hall's* fine crane-neck'd chariot came bounce as it were, upon my recollection; so I sallied forth to ask him how he did, and to borrow

row his carriage, that I might pay my visit in pomp as well as *Pontificalibus*. I found him at home, made a friendly enquiry or two, and told him of the little arrangement I had formed; when he replied with one of his Cynical smiles, that his mortification was in the extreme, for that his chariot was gone post to Scotland. I stared, and he laughed,—not at me, but at his own *conceit*; and you shall have it, such as it is :

I must inform you then, that at the moment when the coach-maker was receiving his last instructions, he himself received a letter; which letter acquainted him that his son, who was quartered at *Edinburgh*, had got into a terrible riot there; to get out of the consequences of which, demanded almost the precise sum
that

that had been destined for the chariot. So that the *hundred and forty pounds*, which had been set apart to build a chariot in London, were employed to repair broken windows, broken lamps and broken heads, in Edinburgh; and *Hall* comforted himself with the conceit that his chariot was gone *post* to Scotland. So much for comforts and conceits;—and happy is it for us when we can, by any means, *conceit* ourselves into comfort. I could say more upon this matter, but my paper is almost filled; and I have only space to express a wish, that your life may never want any of these petty helps to make it as happy as, if I greatly mistake not, it must be honourable—Let me see you soon; and in the mean time, and at all times, may God be with you.

Your's most affectionately,

L. STERNE.

LETTER XI.

To _____, Esq.

Coxwould, near Easingwould.

YOU are not singular in your opinion about my *wonderful* capacity for poetry.—*Beauclerk*; and *Locke*, and I think *Langton*, have said what you have said on the subject, and founded their opinion, as you have done, on the fragment of an Introduction to the Ode to Julia, in *Tristram Shandy*. The unity of the episode would have been wounded, if I had added another line; and if I had added a dozen, my character as a poetical

genius, which, by the bye, I never had, would have been lost for ever—or rather would never have been suspected.

Hall had also similar ideas on this very matter, and, on the strength of his opinion, ventured once to give me an unfinished poem of his own, and bade me go on with it—and so I did, heltering and skeltering at a most terrible rate:—In short, I added some sixty or fourscore lines to the business, which he called doggrel, and which I think he called rightly; however, he chose to let them stand, to use his own phrase, as a curiosity; so into the press they went, and helped to compose the worst squib our crazy friend ever let off. I do not, however, mention these things to lessen the merit of your opinion, by pointing out its similarity to that of others.

You

You need not be ashamed to think with such men, if even they should be wrong, which, on this particular subject, I most solemnly believe you all to be. *Cum his errare* is something—and all that——

I once, it is true, wrote an epitaph, which I liked myself, but the person, at whose request I did it, sacrificed it to one of his own, which he liked better, but which I did not—so my lines were thrown aside, and his own nerveless rhyme was engraved on a marble, which deserved a better inscription; for it covered the dust of one, whose gentle nature, and amiable qualities, merited more than common praise, or common-place eulogium. However, I shed a tear over the sepulchre, which, if the dead could have known it, would have been more acceptable than the
most

most splendid direction that ever glared on monumental alabaster.

I also wrote a kind of Shandean, sing-song, dramatic piece of rhyme for Mr. *Beard*—and he sung it at Ranelagh, as well as on his own stage, for the benefit of some one or other. He asked for something of the kind, and I knew not how to refuse him; for, a year before, he had in a very respectful manner, and without any previous acquaintance, presented me with the freedom of Covent-Garden Theatre. The act was gracious; and I liked it the better, because the monarch of Drury-Lane had known me for some years, and besides had, for some time, occupied a front seat in my page, before he offered me the freedom—not of Drury Lane house, but of Drury-Lane pit. I told him,

him, on the occasion, that he *acted* great things and *did* little ones:—so he stammered and looked foolish, and performed, at length, with a bad grace, what his rival manager was so kind as to do with the best grace in the world—But no more of that—he is so complete on the stage, that I ought not to mention his patch-work off it.

However, to return to my subject—if I can; for digression is interwoven with my nature; and to get to my point, or find my way back to it, when I have wandered aside, as other men do, is not in the line of my faculties.—But though I may not be a poet, the clerk of my parish is—not absolutely in my conceit—but, which is better, in that of his neighbours; and, which is the best of all—in his own. His muse is a professional one,
for

for she only inspires him to indite hymns ; and it is appropriate, for she leads him to such subjects as are suitable to his spiritual office, and which, like those of his brethren *Sternbold* and *Hopkins*, may be said or sung in churches. In short, there had been a terrible disease among the cattle, and our parish had suffered greatly, so that this parochial bard thought it a proper subject for a spiritual song, which he accordingly composed, and gave it out on the Sunday following, to the praise and glory of God, as an hymn of his own composing. Not only the murrain itself, but the sufferers by the calamity, were vociferated through the aisles in all the pomp and devotion of rustic psalmody. The last stanza, which is the only one I recollect, rather unhinged my devotion, but it seemed to rivet that of the congregation,

gation, and therefore I had no right to complain. I leave it with you as a *bonne bouche*, and wish you a good night.

Here's Jemmy How has lost a cow,
And so has Johnny Bland;
Therefore we'll put our trust in God,
And not in any other man.

Yours,

L. S.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

To _____, Esq.

Coxwold, Wednesday Night.

I SEND you, my dear friend, as you request it, the Epitaph which I mentioned in my last epistle to you. I write it from recollection; and, though it may not contain the precise expression, it will certainly possess the sentiment of the original composition—and that is of the most consequence. I remember well it came from the heart, for I most sincerely loved the amiable person, whose virtues deserved a better inscription, and, according

ing to a very common course of things, found a worse. But here it is—

Columns and labour'd urns but vainly show,
An idle scene of fabricated woe :—
The sweet companion and the friend sincere
Need no mechanic arts to force the tear.
In heartfelt numbers, never meant to shine,
'Twill flow eternal o'er an hearse like thine.
'Twill flow while gentle goodness has one friend,
Or kindred tempers have a tear to lend.

Hall liked it, I remember—and *Hall* always knows what ought to be liked, and, in certain humours, will be candid upon these sentimental subjects, and acknowledge that he feels them. He is an excellent scholar and a good critic : but his judgment has more severity than it ought to have, and his taste less delicacy than it should possess. He has, also, great humanity, but, somehow or other, there is
so

so often such a mixture of sarcasm in it, that there are many who will not believe he has a single scruple of it in his composition.—Nay, I am acquainted with several, who cannot be persuaded but that he is a very insensible, hard-hearted man, which I, who have known him long, and known him well, assure you he is not.—He may not always possess the grace of charity, but he feels the reality of it, and continually performs benevolent actions, though not always, I must confess, in a benevolent manner. And here is the grief of the business. He will do a kindness with a sneer, or a joke, or a smile; when, perhaps, a tear, or a grave countenance, at least, would better become him. But this is his way; it is the language of his character; and, though one might wish it to be otherwise, yet I cannot tell what
right

right any of us have to pass a severe sentence upon it, for no other reason in the world, but because our own failings are of a different complexion. And so much for all that.

I am preparing to prance it for a week or ten days at *Scarborough*. If you pass your autumn at *Mulgrave-Hall*, take that place in your way, and I will accompany you on your visit, and then to *Crazy Castle*, and so home: and then to London—and then God knows where—but it shall be where it pleases him: this is *clerically* said, however, and it would be well for the best of us, if it were thought and considered as often as it was said. But so it is, that the lips and the heart, which ought never to be asunder, are sometimes wandering at different corners of the earth. Mine however,

ever, are in the closest conjunction, when I offer you my most affectionate regard. So good night, and may the visions of a good spirit attend you.

Most truly your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIII.

To———, *Esq.**Scarborough,*

I SHALL not reply, my dear friend, to all the kind things you think and say of me.—I trust, indeed, that I deserve some of them; and I am well pleased to find that you think I deserve them all.—But however that may be, I desire you to cherish those benevolent sentiments which you have so warmly expressed in the paper before me, both for your own sake, and that of the person who is the subject of them.

Your

Your commands, in general, should be obeyed without reflection—but in this particular instance, a rare gleam of prudence has shot across me, and, I beg leave to reflect for a few moments on the subject—and were I to take wisdom upon me, and reflect for a few days—the result, I am sure, would be, that I should not obey your commands at all.

The giving advice, my good friend, is the most thankless generosity in the world—because in the first place, it costs you nothing; and, in the next, it is just such a thing as the person to whom you present it will think that he does not want. This, you see, is my way of reasoning; but I believe, from my heart, that it will apply too well to the subject between us.

There

There are such things in the world as *wrong heads* and *right hearts*—and *wrong hearts* and *right heads*.—Now, for myself, and speaking under the influence of my own particular feelings, I would rather be of the *right heart* family, with all their blunders, errors and confusions; but if I want a business to be done, or a plan to be executed, give me the *right head*:—if there is a *right heart* into the bargain, so much the better; but it is upon the *former* that I must rely—and whether the latter be right or wrong, is not a matter of absolute consideration. This is not, my dear friend, quite orthodox, according to your system, but as you proceed, every day will tend to encrease the propinquity of this opinion to your own.

Now,

Now, I am rather disposed to think, without leaning to the uncharitable side of the question, that poor————— is of the *Wrong-head* family.—I know his heart—and I am sure his present scrape arises from the good dispositions of it. Nevertheless, though I think myself a dab at giving good counsel in such cases as his, I cannot bring myself to prescribe on the occasion—It is impossible to do it, without informing him of the nature of his disease, which is neither more nor less than absolute wrong-headedness; and, were I to do it, he would exhibit another symptom of his disorder, by throwing my prescription out of the window, and perhaps threatening the same mischief to the physician himself.

If you have influence sufficient to induce him to apply to me, I will most readily

readily exert my best for him; and I can then do the bitter business, and give the unpalatable dose with a good grace. Here then we will, if you please, let the matters rest for the present.

I write in haste, and on my pillow, that you may, as soon as possible, be acquainted with my sentiments in a matter wherein you have a greater dependence upon me than I fear the event will justify.—So good morning, and God bless you.—

I received a letter, yesterday, from poor dear Lydia.—It is an amiable mad-cap—and God bless her also.—Once more adieu.

Yours, &c.

L. STERNE.

E

LETTER

L E T T E R XIV.

Scarborough, Aug. 29, 1765.

YOU refine too much, my dear friend,—you do indeed.—Your reasoning is ingenious, and produces a neat, pretty, plausible train of argument, that would make a figure in a company of female philosophers; but if committed to paper would be pardonable only when written on the fan of some *pedantic Dulcinea*. You run into divisions, when a simple modulation would answer better; that is, would produce more pleasing effects both in yourself, and the sentimental spirit whom you might wish to please.

Opinion,

Opinion, my dear fellow, somehow or other, rules all mankind; and not like a kind master, or, which would be more congenial, a gentle mistress, but like a tyrant whose wish is power, and whose gratification is servility.—Opinion leads us by the ears, the eyes,—and, I had almost said, by the *nose*. It warps our understandings, confounds our judgments, dissipates experience and turns our passions to its purpose. In short, it becomes the governess of our lives, and usurps the place of reason, which it has kicked out of office.—This is among the strange truths which cannot be explained but by that mortifying description which time will display to your experience hereafter, with ten times the credit that would accompany any present endeavours of mine to the same purpose.

If you would know more of the matter and can bring yourself to risque the opinion, which, by the bye, I do not advise you to do, ask A——why he submits, with such a placid subservience, to the little wench who lives with him? You know—and all his friends know—that he has but half, nay not half the enjoyments of life, through the fear of her vengeance, whatever it may be. He has fortune, understanding, and courage:—he loves society, and adds greatly to the pleasures of it,—and yet, how often does he leave it half-enjoyed! Nay, to come more home to the business, how often has he left our pleasant classical meetings, before they have arisen to their usual glow, in order to humour this little piece of disgrace, whom he has not the resolution to send back to the banks of the Wye, where the fifty pounds

pounds a year he might give her, would make her queen of the village!—We pity poor A——, we argue with him, we wonder at him—do we not?—But in this we deceive ourselves,—for the wisest and best of us are governed by some little dirty drab of an opinion, whose governance is equally disgraceful, and may be much more injurious—as it will, perhaps, give a colour to the whole current of our lives. A mistress, with all her arts and fascinations, may, in time, be got rid of; but opinion, once rooted, becomes a part of ourselves—it lives and dies with us.

It must be acknowledged, that I have been rather sermonic this fine morning, but you know how and where to apply what has been written, and I leave the whole to your practice, if you think proper;

per; and if you do not—but what have I to do with *ifs*?—It is an exceptional monosyllable, and I fling it from me.

B——is here, and tells me that he left you continually driving between London and Richmond—What beauty of the Hill has enchanted you there? Or what swan of the silver Thames are you dying for?—I take it very ill of you that you never favour me with a single communication concerning your *Dorothies* or your *Delias*: I protest most seriously that I will never write to you again, till you give me an history of your chains; and who it is has bound you at present on the river's bank—tell me who the Naiad is.

Mr. F——, the Apostolic E——, as Lady—— calls him, in his way to——,
hinted

hinted to me something serious. He talked of marriage,—to which I replied, God forbid!—But do not, I pray, be angry with my exclamation; for it was neither a thoughtless or a peevish one, but an impulse of that sincere regard which you more than deserve from me.—With your dispositions, and in your situation, I hardly think there is a woman in the kingdom who would be an happy match for you: and if you think proper to ask me, I will, hereafter, tell you why:—at present I shall content myself with telling you that

I am,

most cordially your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XV.

September-9, 1765.

I MEAN my dear friend, that this epistle should meet you, and greet you, a day or two at least before you leave town; and I wish it, from that spirit of miserable self-interest, which you know governs and directs me in all I do.—But, lest you should not like this reason, I will give you another, and which may be nearer the truth; at least I hope so.

I want very much to know whether

B—

B——has arranged the matter with *Foley* the banker, at *Paris*, about Mrs. Sterne's remittance, as I ordered him. You must know that I suspect he has been dilatory, not from dishonesty, for I believe him to be as honest a poor creature as was ever vamped into the form he wears: but, perhaps, his exchequer might not be in a convenient state to answer my orders; and if so, I only beg to be informed of the truth; which, as he does not answer my letters, he appears to be afraid to tell.

I have received a letter from *Toulouse* which does not comfort my spirits; and I have reason to apprehend from thence, that there is some neglect at the fountain head of my treasury, which I must beg you to enquire into; and, if you see occasion, to correct, in order that the little

rill of ways and means may not be interrupted, between *London* and *Languedoc*—that is, between me and Mrs. Sterne, and my poor dear Lydia.

They write me word that they have drawn upon *Foley*, as I desired, who tells them he has no effects to answer the bill; but that, if they are in distress, he will accommodate them for my sake. This is very handsome dealing, and I am rather proud of it;—but, in the mean time, there is an uncertainty which is very unpleasant—I mean to the poor women, who are at such a distance, that a great deal of anxious suspense must be suffered before the mistake can be rectified.

Besides,——, these things breed words, and questions, as well as suspicions, and all that.—

that.—My dear Lydia contents herself with a gentle complaint or so ; but her mother does not hesitate to discharge a volume of reproaches. Now the truth is, that I deserve neither the one nor the other,—and had managed the matter for the supply of their wants, and the ridding myself of all future anxiety in the business, in as plain a manner as my hand-writing and spirit of calculation could make it.—However, it has abated the ardour of my Knight Errantry for the present, and thrown more than a sickly thought or two on my imagination.

I am prodigal of words, my dear friend, in a matter wherein a mere hint is all that would be necessary for you to exert yourself. So do me the honour to see that it is absolutely done without a moment's delay ;
and

and if B——should hesitate the tythe of an instant,—do that for me, my friend, which I would do for you on a similar occasion.—So God blefs you.—My heart will not suffer me to offer you an apology, because I know it will be ungracious to your's.—Once more farewell!

Most cordially your's,

L. STERNE.

L E T T E R XVI.

To———, *Esq.*

Coxwold, Wednesday Evening.

I HAVE received the Letter which you informed me I should receive from Doctor L——, and return you both my best thanks for it.—He is certainly a man of Learning and an excellent Critic, and would do well to employ his leisure hours on *Virgil*; or rather, if I understand him well, on *Horace*; and he would give us such a Commentary on both those Authors as we have not, and perhaps, may never have, if he does not set about it.

But

But *Tristram Shandy*, my friend, was made and formed to baffle all criticism:—and I will venture to rest the book on this ground,—that it is either above the power or beneath the attention of any critic or hypercritic whatsoever.—I did not fashion it according to any rule.—I left my fancy, or my Genius, or my feelings,—call it what you may,—to its own free course, without a single intruding reflection, that there ever had been such a man as *Aristotle* in the world.

When I mounted my Hobby Horse, I never thought, or pretended to think, where I was going, or whether I should return home to dinner or supper, the next day, or the next week:—I let him take his own course; and amble, or curvet, or trot or go a sober, sorrowful Lackadayfical pace
as

as it pleased him best.—It was all one to me, for my temper was ever in unison with his manner of courting it,—be it what it might. I never pricked him with a spur, or struck him with a whip; but let the rein lay loosely on his neck, and he was wont to take his way without doing injury to any one.

Some would laugh at us as we passed along,—and some seemed to pity us—and now and then a melancholy tender hearted passenger would look at us and heave a sigh.—Thus have we travelled together—but my poor *Rosinante* did not, like *Balam's Ass*, stand still if he saw an *Angel* in the way, but directly pushed up to her;—and if it were but a damsel, sitting by a fountain, who would let me take a refreshing draught from her cup, she was, surely an *Angel* to me.

The

The grand Error of Life is, that we look too far:—We scale the Heavens,—we dig down to the centre of the Earth, for Systems,—and we forget ourselves.—Truth lies before us; it is in the high way path; and the Ploughman treads on it with his clouted Shoon.

Nature defies the rule and the Line;—Art raises its structures, and forms its works on their aid:—but Nature has her own Laws, which Art cannot always comprehend, and Criticism can never reach.

Doctor L——— acknowledges, however, that my *Sermon on Conscience* is a most admirable composition; but is of opinion that it is degraded by being made a part of *Tristram Shandy*—Now, if you please; be so good as to note my answer:—If this
sermon

sermon is so excellent, and I myself believe it to be so,—because *Judge Burnet*, who was a man of taste and erudition, as well as Law, desired me to print it;—I say if it be a good Sermon, it ought to be read; and since it appeared in the pages of *Tristram Shandy*, it has been read by thousands; whereas the fact is, that when it was published by itself, it was read by no one.

I have answered Doctor L———with all the respect which his amiable Character and admirable Talents deserve; but I have told him, at the same time, that my book was not written to be tried by any known Laws of Scholastic Criticism; and that if I thought any thing I might hereafter write would be within their reach, I would throw the Manuscript that is now before me into the fire, and never dip my pen into
my

my Ink-stand again, but for the purpose of assuring some uncritical, and uncriticising friend, like yourself, of my sincere and cordial regard.—At this moment I make that offering to you,—So God be with you.

L. S.

I begin to peep out of my hermitage a little; for Lord and Lady Fauconberg are come down, and bring with them, as usual, a large store of amiable, easy, and hospitable virtues.—I wish you were here to partake of, and add to them.

LETTER

LETTER XVII.

To _____, Esq.

Monday Evening.

YOU have hit my fancy most wonderfully, in the account you have given me of Lady——; the Juno character not only prevails, but absolutely predominates. The *Minerva* qualities are all secondary,—and as to any *Cyprian* dispositions, I know nothing about them.

She certainly possesses a very good understanding, and is not without attainments; but both the one and the other derive

derive all their consequence from her manners.—She has somewhat of an imperious disposition, which would be either silently despised by some, or violently opposed by others, if she did not give a grace to it that annihilates any unpleasant sensation that might attempt to rise in the breast of a by-stander, or which is better, by-fitter : but this is not all, for it calls forth also, that kind of respectful submission, which does not lessen us in our own opinion for having practised it.

I never, in my life, felt the merit of exterior decoration so much as in my conversations and communications with this Lady ; and I really do not know any position, in the present school of fashion, where a young man might learn so much as in her drawing room, or without meaning

ing any mischievous equivoque, her dressing room.—It is really no common satisfaction to me to reflect that my young friend is an *Elève* of such an instructress.

There is a time and circumstance of life, and that period and circumstance are now yours, when nothing but the easy society, and little tender friendships of an accomplished woman are wanting to render a character complete:—and without saying a word more than I think on the business,—I cannot but express my satisfaction that you are in such hands as will probably produce the very effects which so sincere a friend as myself can wish and desire.

It has ever been a maxim with me, since I knew any thing of the world, that

we

we are all of us as much in want of a Schoolmistress at the finish, as we do at the commencement of our education. And as you are so fortunate as to have Lady———to teach you the *Horn-book* of high life, you will bid fair to spell it and put it together, so as to become the charm of all society :—and you will lose, what I so much wish you to lose, the attention to one, and the neglect of the many ; which though there may be something amiable in the principle, is not adapted to the general intercourse of life.

Lady M——F——might forward business, and Lady C——I am sure is ready to do it—so that in such a soil, in such a season, and with such cultivations, what has not partial friendship a right to expect. And now what can I do better than leave you
in

in such good and excellent company, and
desire you, in return to present my respect-
ful compliments to them all,—and to
receive yourself the most cordial regard of

your very sincere.

and affectionate

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XVIII.

To_____

Coxwold, Wednesday Noon.

I UNDERSTAND, from Mr. Phipps, * that you are absolutely engaged to pass the summer, or rather the Autumn, with him at *Mulgrave-Hall*; so that I now consider a previous visit to me as a matter on which I may depend, and to which, believe me, I look with real satisfaction. We will while away a month or six weeks at my vicarage in a manner which, I trust, will not be unpleasing or unprofitable to you.

* The Late Lord *Mulgrave*.

However,

However, in saying this, or rather writing it, I address myself to the excellence of your heart, which I cannot enough admire, and that cultivated understanding of which I have the greatest hopes.—I know the pleasures you will quit, and the societies you must sacrifice, to come and pass any part of the Summer with me;—but, at the same time, I do not doubt of your visit,—and that a Shandean *Tête à Tête* has its charms for you.

I remember a circumstance, which I shall never think of without the utmost pride in my own heart, and the most sincere affection for yours;—but, besides that it flattered me in the highest degree, it proved that you possessed a source of sentiment which, whatever may befall you in life, must preserve you in honour and happiness:—

F

with

with such a delicious quality, misfortune will never be able to bear you down ; nor will folly, passion, or even vice, though they may for a time obscure or lessen the excellence of your character, possess the power of destroying it.—I allude to a little delicate touch of sentiment that escaped you last winter,—which though I have mentioned it with every possible elogium to others, again and again, I have never before hinted it even to you ; the moment, however, is now come, when my spirit urges me to speak of it ; and I do it with those dispositions which are congenial to the subject, and, I trust, natural to myself.

You cannot absolutely have forgotten an evening visit which you paid me last January, in Bond Street, when I was ill in bed ;—nor ought it to escape your occasional

onal reflection that you sat by my bed-side the whole night, performing every act of the most friendly and pious attention.—I then thought that the scare-crow death was at my heels ;—nay, I thought the villain had got me by the throat,—and I told you as much.—However, it pleased Heaven, that I should not be snatched from the world at that moment ; though I spoke my own honest opinion when I vaticinated my destiny by expressing little hopes of getting to the winter's end——

I believe, my dear friend, said I, that I shall soon be off.—I hope not, you replied, with a squeeze of my hand and a sigh of your heart, which went to the very bottom of mine :—but,—you were pleased to add, lest that should be the case, I hope you will do me the favour to let me be always with you, that I may have every atom of

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F 2

advantage

advantage and comfort your society may afford me, while Heaven permits it to last.—

I spoke no reply, for I could not,—but my heart made one then, and will continue to do so,—till it is become *a clod of the Valley*.

Hence it is, that I do not doubt but you will quit the ring of pleasure without regret, to come and sit with me beneath my Honey-Suckle, which is now flaunting like a Ranelagh beauty, and accompany me in paying my nuns their penfive evening visit.—We can go to vespers with them, and return home to our curds and cream with more delicious sentiments than all the pleasures of the world, and the beauties

beauties thereof, in their vainest moments, can truly afford.

I am busy about another couple of volumes to amuse, and, as I hope, to instruct a gouty and a splenetic world;—in which, I solemnly declare, I have no Ambition to remain, but for the love I bear to such friends as you; and, perhaps, the vanity, which I am vain enough not to call an idle one, of adding a few more leaves to the wreath which I have been able to weave for my own little glory.

Come, then, and let me read the pages to you as they fall from my pen; and be a *Mentor* to *Tristram*, as you have been to *Yorick*.—At all events,—I am sure you cannot come to York without coming to me; and I shall triumph completely over

Lad y

Lady Lepel, &c. if I draw you for a month from the bright centre to which you are so naturally attracted. So God bless you,—and believe me, with all sincerity, to be

Most affectionately your's,

L. S T E R N E.

LETTER

L E T T E R XIX.

To _____

Bisbepthorp, Thursday night.

I SAW the charming *Mrs. Vesey* but for a moment, and she contrived with her voice and her thousand other graces to *dis—order* me; and what she will have to answer for on the occasion, I shall not employ my casuistry to determine;—nor shall I ask my good friend the Archbishop, from whose house, and amidst whose kindness and hospitality I address this to you.

I envy, however, your saunter together round an *empty Ranelagh*, though I should
have

have liked it the better, because it was empty, and would give the imagination and every delicious feeling, opportunity to make one forget there was another being in the room—but ourselves.

You will, I am sure, more than understand me when I mention that sense of female perfection,—I mean, however, when the female is sitting or walking beside you,—which so possesses the mind that the whole Globe seems to be occupied by none but you two.—When your hearts, in perfect unison, or, I should rather say, harmony with each other, produce the same chords,—and blossom with the same flowers of thought and sentiment.

These hours,—which virtuous, tender minds have the power of separating from
the

the melancholy seasons of life,—make ample amends for the weight of cares and disappointments, which the happiest of us are doomed to bear.—They cast the brightest sunshine on the dreary landscape,—and form a kind of refuge from the stormy wind and tempest.

With such a companion, is not the primrose bank and the cottage, which humble virtue has raised on its side, superior to all that splendour and wealth has formed in the palaces of monarchs—The scented heath is then the *perfumed Araby*, and though the Nightingale should refuse to lodge among the branches of the poor solitary tree that overshadows us,—if my fair minstrel did but pour forth the melting strain, I would not look to the musick of the spheres for ravishment.

There is something, my dear friend, most wonderfully pleasant in the idea of getting away from the world ;—and though I have ever found it a great comfort, yet I have been more vain of the business, when I have done it in the midst of the world — But this *aberration* from the crowd, while you are surrounded and pressed by it, is only to be accomplished by the magic of female perfection.—— Friendship, with all its powers,—mere friendship, cannot do it.——A more refined sentiment must employ its influence to wrap the heart in this delicious oblivion.——It is too pleasing to last long,—for envious, sleepless care is ever on the watch to awake us from the bewitching trance.

You, my friend, possess something of the reality of it : and I, while I enjoy your happiness,

happiness, apply to fancy for the purpose of creating a copy of it.—So I sit myself down upon the turf, and place a lovely fair one by my side,—as lovely, if possible, as Mrs. V——, and having plucked a sprig of blossoms from the May-bush, I place it in her bosom, and then address some tender tale to her heart,—and if she weeps at my story, I take the white handkerchief she holds in her hand and wipe the tears from off her cheek: and then I dry my own with it:—and thus the delightful vision gives wing to a lazy hour, calms my spirits, and composes me for my pillow.

To wish that care may never plant a thorn upon yours, would be an idle employment of votive regard;—but that you may preserve the virtue which will blunt
their

their points, and continue to possess the feelings which will, sometimes, pluck them away, is a wish not unworthy of that friendship, with which

I am,

your most affectionate,

L. S T E R N E.

P. S. Lydia writes me word she has got a lover.—Poor dear Girl!—

L E T T E R XX.

To ———.

Sunday Evening.

DO not imagine, my dear Boy—
and do not suffer, I beseech you
any pedantic, cold-hearted fellow to per-
suade you—that *sensibility is an evil*. You
may take my word on this subject, as you
have been pleased to do on many others—
that sensibility is one of the first blessings
of life—as well as the brightest ornament
of the human character.

You do not explain matters to me,
which, by the bye, is not fair ; but I sup-
pose,

pose, from the tenor of your letter, which is now beside me, that you have been made a dupe of by some artful person—who, I am disposed to think, is some *cunning baggage*—and that, under the impressions of this game that has been played you, your vanity is alarmed, and your understanding piqued; and then, you lay all this dire grievance in a very pettish manner, let me tell you, at the door of your sensibility. And, which is worse than all the rest, you write to me as if you really believed yourself to be in earnest, in all the see-saw observations you have written to me on the subject.

Be assured, my dear friend, if I thought the sentiments of your last letter were not the sentiments of a sickly moment—if I could be made to believe, for an instant, that

that they proceeded from you, in a sober, reflecting condition of your mind—I should give you over as incurable, and banish all my hopes of your rising into that proud honour, and brilliant reputation, which, I trust, you will one day possess.

I was almost going to write—and wherefore should I not—that there is an amiable kind of *cullibility*, which is as superior to the slow precaution of worldly wisdom, as the sound of *Abel's Viol di Gamba*, to the braying of an ass on the other side of my paling.

If I should, at any time, hear a man pique himself upon never having been a dupe—I should grievously suspect that such an one will, some time or other, give
cause

cause to be thought, at best, a mean-spirited, dirty rascal.

You may think this a strange doctrine—but, be that as it may—I am not ashamed to adopt it.—What would you say of any character, who had neither humanity, generosity, nor confidence?—Why you would say—I know you would—such a man

Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils—

And yet imposition—dupery—deception—call it by what name you will—attends upon these virtues like their shadow. For virtue, my dear friend, like every other possession in this world, though it is the most valuable of all—is of a mixed nature; and the very inconveniencies of it, if they deserve that name, form the basis on which its importance and natural excellence is established.

Sensibility

Sensibility is oftentimes betrayed into a foolish thing;—but its folly is amiable, and some one or other is the better for it. I am not for its excesses—or a blind submission to its impulse, which produces them;—yet, some how or other, I should be strongly disposed to hug the being, who would take the rag off his back—to place it on the shivering wretch who had nought to cover him.

Discretion is a cold quality—but I have no objection to the possessing as much of it—as will direct your finer feelings to their proper objects;—but here let its office finish; if it proceeds a step further there may be mischief;—it may cool that current which is the life-blood of all virtue, and will, I trust, warm your heart, till it is become a clod of the valley.

Sensibility

Sensibility is the source of those delicious feelings which give a brighter colour to our joys, and turn our tears to rapture.— Though it may, now and then, lead us into a scrape, as we pass through life—you may be assured, my dear friend, it will get us out of them all, *at the end of it*;—and that is a matter which wiser men than myself will tell you is well worth thinking about.

So leaving you to your contemplations—and wishing them and every thing you do, an happy issue—I remain, with great truth,

your affectionate,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXI.

To ———.

Bond Street, Thursday Morning.

SO, my dear friend, you are pleased to be very angry with the *Reviewers*;—so am not I,—but as your displeasure proceeds from your regard for me, —I thank you, as I ought to do,—again and again.

I really do not know to whom I am personally indebted for so much obliging illiberality.—Nor can I tell whether it is the society at large, or a splenetic Individual, to whom I am to acknowledge my obligation.—I have never enquired who it is,

is, or who they are:—and if I knew him or them,—what would it signify?—and wherefore should I give their names immortality in my writings, which they will never find in their own?——Let the Affes bray as they like;—I shall treat their worships as they deserve, in my own way and manner,—and in a way and manner that they will like less than any other.

There is a certain race of people, who are ever aiming to treat their betters in some scurvy way or other—but it has ever been a practice with me, not to mind a little dirt thrown upon my coat,—so that I keep my *lining unrumped*.——And so much for that envy, ignorance and ill-nature, for which, what I have written, is far too much.

I am

I am rejoiced, however, for twenty good reasons, which I will tell you hereafter, that London lies in your way between Oxfordshire and Suffolk, and one of them I will tell you now—which is, that you can be of very great service to me; so I would desire you to prepare yourself to do me a kindness; if I did not know that you are always in such a state of preparation.

The town is so empty, that though I have been in it, full four and twenty hours, I have seen only three people I know—Foote on the stage—Sir Charles Davers at St. James's Coffee-house, and Williams, who was an hasty bird of passage, on his flight to Brighthelmstone, where I am told he is making love in right earnest, to a very fine woman, and with all the success his friends can wish him. Our races at York were every thing we could desire

fire them to be in the ball-room, and every thing we did not desire them to be on the ground. The rain said nay, with a vengeance, to the sports of the course, for all the water-spouts of the heavens seemed to be let loose upon it. However in the amusements *under cover*, we were all as merry as heart could wish. I had promised a certain person that you should be there, and was obliged to parry a score or two of reproaches on your account.

But though I forgot to tell it you before, I am by no means well, and if I do not get away from this climate before winter sets in, I shall never see another spring in this world ; and it is to forward my journey to the South, that I request you to make haste to me from the West.

Alas,

Alas, alas, my friend! I begin to feel that I lose strength in these annual struggles and encounters with that miserable scare-crow, who knows as well as I do, that, do what I can he will finally get the better of me, and all of us. Indeed, he has already beat the vizard from my helmet, and the point of my spear is not as it was wont to be. But while it pleases heaven to grant me life, it will, I trust, grant me spirits to bear up against the scurvy circumstances of it, and preserve to my last separating sigh, that sensibility to whatever is kind and gracious, which, when once it possesses the heart, makes, I trust, ample amends for a large portion of human error.

You, may, indeed, believe, that while I am sensible of any thing, I shall be sensible
of

of your friendship; and I have every reason to think, that should my term be drawing nigh to its period, you will continue to love me while I live, and when I am no more, to cherish the memory of

Your ever faithful

and affectionate

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXII.

To _____

Sunday Morning.

IF you wish to have the representation of my spare, meagre-form—which by the bye, is not worth the canvas it must be painted on—you shall be most welcome to it; and I am happy in the reflection, that when my bones shall be laid low, there may be any resemblance of me, which may recall my image to your friendly and sympathizing recollection.

G

But

But you must mention the business to *Reynolds* yourself; for I will tell you why I cannot. He has already painted a very excellent portrait of me, which, when I went to pay him for, he desired me to accept, as a tribute, to use his own elegant and flattering expression, that his heart wished to pay to my genius. That man's way of thinking and manners, are at least equal to his pencil.

You see therefore the delicacy of my situation, as well as the necessity, if the genius of *Reynolds* is to be employed in the business, of your taking it entirely upon yourself. Or if your friendly impatience which you express with so much kindness, will let you wait till we make our tour to *Bath*, your favourite *Gainsborough* may do the deed.

Or

Or why not your little friend *Cosway*, who is rising fast into fame and fortune? But be it as you please, and arrange it according to your own fancy.

At all events, I shall treat myself when I get to Rome with my own busto, if *Nollikens* does not make a demand for it that may be inconsistent with my Exchequer. The statuary decorations of my grandfather the Archbishop's monument, in the Cathedral at York, which you admire so much, have given birth, I believe, to this whim of mine; and this piece of marble, which my vanity—for let it be vanity if you please—destines for myself, may be placed by the hand of friendship, and by yours perhaps, near my grave—and so much for that.

But I was born for digressions, and I, therefore, tell you at once, not rashly, or prematurely, but with all due sobriety and reflection, that Lord —— is of a low, base, pimping nature. If he had been nothing but a fool, I should have said—Have mercy upon him : but he has just understanding sufficient to make him answerable for what he does, and not sufficient to perceive the superiority of what is great over what is little.—If ever that man rises into a good or a noble action, I would be bound to be considered as a retailer of scandal, and an ill-natured man, as long as I live, and as long as my memory lives ; but no more of him I beseech you—and the hour tells me to write no more of any thing, for I must hasten where I ought to have been half an hour

hour ago—so God bless you, and believe me, where ever I am, to be

Most cordially yours,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXIII.

To ———

Monday Morning.

THE story, my dear friend, which you heard related, with such an air of authority, is like many other true stories, absolutely false. Mr. *Hume* and I never had a dispute—I mean a serious, angry or petulant dispute, in our lives:—indeed I should be most exceedingly surprized to hear that *David* ever had an unpleasant contention with any man;—and if I should be made to believe that such an event had happened, nothing

thing would persuade me that his opponent was not in the wrong: for, in my life, did I never meet with a being of a more placid and gentle nature; and it is this amiable turn of his character, that has given more consequence and force to his scepticism, than all the arguments of his sophistry.—You may depend on this as a truth.

We had, I remember well, a little pleasant sparring at Lord *Hertford's* table at *Paris*; but there was nothing in it that did not bear the marks of good-will and urbanity on both sides.—I had preached that very day at the Ambassador's Chapel, and *David* was disposed to make a little merry with the *Parson*; and, in return, the *Parson* was equally disposed to make a little mirth

mirth with the *Infidel*; we laughed at one another, and the company laughed with us both—and, whatever your informer might pretend, he certainly was not one of that company.

As for his other history, that I preached an offensive sermon at the Ambassador's Chapel—it is equally founded in truth; for Lord Hertford did me the honour to thank me for it again and again. The *text*, I will own, was an *unlucky* one, and that was all your informer could have heard to have justified his report.—If he fell asleep immediately after I repeated it—I will forgive him.

The fact was as follows :

Lord

Lord *Hertford* had just taken and furnished a magnificent *Hotel*; and as every thing, and any thing gives the fashion of the moment at Paris, it had been the fashion for every one to go to see the English Ambassador's new hotel.—It occupied the curiosity, formed the amusement, and gave a subject of conversation to the polite circles of Paris, for a fortnight at least.

Now it fell to my lot, that is to say, I was requested to preach, the first day service was performed in the chapel of this new hotel.—The message was brought me when I was playing a sober game of Whist with the *Thornbills*, and whether it was that I was called rather abruptly from my afternoon's amusement to prepare myself for this business, for it was to be on the next day;

or from what other cause I did not pretend to determine, but that unlucky kind of fit seized me, which you know I can never resist, and a very unlucky text did come into my head,—and you will say so when you read it.

“ And Hezekiah said unto the Prophet,
“ I have shewn them my vessels of gold,
“ and my vessels of silver, and my wives
“ and my concubines, and my boxes of
“ ointment, and whatever I have in my
“ house, have I shewn unto them: and the
“ Prophet said unto Hezekiah, thou hast
“ done very foolishly.”

Now, as the text is part of Holy writ, that could not give offence; though wicked wits are sometimes disposed to ill-treat

it with their own scurvy misrepresentations.—And as to the discourse itself, nothing could be more innocent, and *David Hume* favoured it with his grace and approbation.

But here I am got, I know not how, writing about myself for whole pages together—whereas the only part of my letters that can justify my being an egotist, is, when I assure any gentle spirit, or faithful friend, as I now do you, that I am her, or his, or your

Most affectionate,

humble servant.

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXIV.

To _____

Wednesday Noon.

BELIEVE me, my dear friend, I have no great faith in Doctors. Some eminent ones of the faculty assured me, many years ago, that if I continued to do as I was then doing, I should not live three months. Now the fact is, that I have been doing exactly what they told me I ought not to do, for thirteen years together—and here I am, as thin, it is true, but as fau-
cy

cy as ever; and it will not be my fault, bif I do not continue to give them the lie for another period of equal duration.

It is Lord Bacon, I think, who observes, —at least be it who it may that made the observation, it is not unworthy the great man whose name I have just written — That Physicians are old women, who sit by your bed-side till they kill you, or Nature cures you.

There is an uncertainty in the business that often baffles experience, and renders genius abortive — Tho' I mean not, believe me, to be severe on a science which is sometimes made the means of doing good. Nay, the science itself considered, naturally and physically, is the eye of all the rest. But

I do

I do not always hold my peace when I reflect on those self-conceited, upstart professors of it, who fly and bounce, and give themselves airs, if you do not read the directions upon the label of a phial, which contains the matter of their prescriptions, with as much reverence, as if it had been penned by St. *Luke* himself.

Goddeſs of Health—let me drink thy healing and ſuſtaining beverage at the pure fountain which flows at thy command! Give me to breathe the balmy air, and to feel the enlivening ſun—and ſo I will!—for if I do not ſee you in fifteen days, I will on the ſixteenth, ſtep quickly into the Dover coach, and proceed without you to the banks of the *Rhone*, where you may follow me if you pleaſe—and if you do not,
the

the difference between us will be—that while you are passing your Christmas-day in fencing against fogs, by warm cloaths and large fires, I shall be sitting on the grass, courting no warmth but the all-cheering one which proceeds from the grand luminary of nature.

So think on these things I beseech you—and let me know about it, for I will not remain gasping another month in London, even for your sake,—or for your company, which,—I might add, would be for my own sake.

In the mean time, and at all times, may God bless you.

I am,
most cordially your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

To_____

Wednesday Noon.

I AM always getting into a scrape, not from a carelessness of offending, as some good-humoured people have suspected, for I do not wish to give offence, but from the want of being understood.—Pope has well expressed the hardship of being forced

_____to trudge

Without a second and without a judge.

I think

I think the quotation is correct.—Indeed, a man may proceed well enough without a second. Genius is oftentimes so far from wanting such an assistant, that it is frequently clogged by it;—but to be without a judge is a mortification which comes home with much severity to the bosoms of those who feel, or fancy, which is pretty near the same thing, that judgment—I mean impartial, adequate judgment, would be their reward.

To be eternally misunderstood, and which naturally follows, to be eternally misrepresented by ignorance, is far, far worse than to be slandered by malice.—Calumny is more than oftentimes, for it is almost always the sacrifice which vice pays to virtue, and folly offers up to wisdom.—A wise man, while he pities the efforts

forts of slander, will feel a kind of consequence from the exertion of them;—like the philosopher who is said to have raised a monument to his own fame, with the stones, which the malignity of his competitors had thrown at him.

The divorce between virtue and reputation is too common to be wondered at—though it is too unjust not to be lamented: but that being a circumstance which connects itself with something like the general order of Providence, we are able to console ourselves under it, by hope and resignation. But in the little, and comparatively speaking, the petty business of human fame—the mind may be justified in kicking at the perversions to which its honest and best endeavours are so continually subject.

I do most sincerely assure you, that I have seldom been so proud of myself and the little display of my talents,—whatever they may be—as I was in the very circumstance which has given so much uneasiness. I intended no severity—I was all complacency and good humour—my spirits were in unison with every generous and gracious thought,—and, so far was I from possessing the idea of giving offence—and to a *Lady*—that there never was a moment of my life, perhaps, when I was so disposed to buckle on my armour, and mount my *Rosinante*, to go and fight the cause of injured or captive beauty.—But instead of all this, heream I considered as the very monster whom I myself was ready to combat and to destroy.

You

You will, therefore, be so good as to communicate these thoughts, in as much better a manner as you please, to Mrs. H——, and assure her, that she has only done what so many have done before her—that is, she has *misconceived*, or, as that word may produce a *misconception*—she has *misunderstood* me.

So far I am most willing to travel in the high-way of apology; and, if she is disposed to smile, I will receive her returning favour, with all due acknowledgments; but if she should think it clever, or witty, or consequential, to continue to be offended—I will not fail to remember her in a postscript to my chapter on the right and wrong end of a woman;

man; which, though my uncle Toby, from a certain combination of circumstances could never be made to understand, I will explain to the world in such a manner, that they who run may read.

I am not, however, unintelligible to all. There are some spirits who want no key either to my speech or my writings; and they—I mean the spirits—are of the first order. This is some comfort, and that comfort increases both in its weight and measure, on the reflection that you are one of them.

But my paper and postman's bell both warn me to do—what I ought to have done at least a page ago—
and

and that is to write adieu; so adieu,
and God blefs you.

I am,

most cordially your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXVI.

To _____

Thursday, Nov. 1.

WERE I a Minister of State—instead of being a country-parson;—or rather, though I do not know that it is the better thing of the two,—were I king of a country, not like *Sancho-Pancho*, without a will of my own, but with all the rights, privileges and immunities belonging to such a situation, I would not suffer a man of genius to be pulled to pieces, or pulled down, or even whistled at, by any man who had not some sort of genius

nus of his own.—That is to say, I would not suffer blockheads of any denomination to shew their heads in my territories.

What—will you say—is there no saving clause for the ignorant and the unlettered? —No spot set apart for those on whom science has not beamed; or the current of whose genius poverty has frozen?—My dear friend, you do not quite understand me,—and I beg of you not to suppose—that all men are *blockheads* who are not *learned*—and that no man who is *learned* can be a *blockhead*.

My definitions are not borrowed from the common room of a College, or the dull muzzing *pericranium* of a word-mongering dictionary maker, but from the

the book of Nature, the volume of the world, and the pandects of experience. There I find a *blockhead* to be a man, (for I am not at present in a humour to involve the poor woman in the definition) who thinks he has what, in fact, he has not—and who does not know how to make a right use of that which he has.

It is the mode of applying *means* to *ends* that marks the character of superior understanding.—The poor scare-crow of a beast that *Torick* rode so long and to the last, being once set in the right road, will sooner get to the end of his journey, than the fleetest race-horse of *Newmarket*, who has taken an opposite direction.

Wisdom very often cannot read or write, and *Folly* will often quote you passages

H

from

from all the *dead*, and half the living languages. I beg therefore, you will not form a bad,—that is to say, a false idea of this kingdom of mine—for whenever I get it, you may be sure of being well appointed, and living at your ease, as every one must do *there*, who lives to his honour.—But to the point.

To the point, did I say?—Alas! there is so much *zig-zag* in my destiny, that it is impossible for me to keep going on strait through one poor letter—and that to a friend; but so it is—for here is a visitor arrived to whom I cannot say nay—and who obliges me to write adieu, a page or two, or three, perhaps, before I intended to do it. I must therefore fold up my paper as it is—and shall only add, God bless you—
which,

which, however, is the constant and sincerest wish of

your affectionate,

L. STERNE.

LETTER XXVII.

To ———.

Dijon, Nov. 9, 1765.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I Recommend it to you,—not, perhaps, above all things, but very assuredly above most things,—to stick to your own understanding a little more than you do ; for, believe me, an ounce of it will answer your purpose better than a pound weight of other people's. There is a certain timidity which renders early life amiable,

able, as a matter of speculation ; but is very inconvenient indeed, not to say dangerous, according to the present humour of the world, in matters of practice.

There is a manly confidence, which, as it springs from a consciousness of possessing certain excellent qualities and valuable attainments, we cannot have too early ; and there is no more impropriety in offering manifestations of it to the world, than the putting on your helmet in the day of battle. We want it as a protection—I say as a protection, from the insults and injuries of others ; for, in your particular circumstances, I consider it merely as a defensive quality—to prevent you from being run down, or run over, by the first ignorant blockhead or insolent coxcomb, who perceives

ceives your modesty to be a restraint on your spirit.

But this by the way.—The application of it is left to your own discernment and good sense, of which I shall not write what I think, and what some others think, whose testimony will wear well.

I am so much better pleased since I set my foot on the Continent, that it would do you good to see—and more good still to hear me ; for I have recovered my voice in this genial climate ; and so far am I now from finding a difficulty to make myself heard across the table, that I am almost fit to preach in a cathedral.

Here they are all hey—go—mad.—The vintage has been abundant, and is now at
the

the close. Every eye beams delight, and every voice is attuned to joy.—Though I am running away as fast as I can well go, and am withal so pressed by the rascal, death ! that I ought not in prudence to take time to look behind me ; yet cannot I resist the temptation of getting out of my chaise, and sitting for a whole evening on a bank, to see those happy people dance away the labours of the day : and thus they contrive, for two or three hours at least out of the four and twenty, *to forget*, God bless 'em, that there are such things as labour and care in the world.

This innocent oblivion of sorrow is one of the happiest arts of life ; and philosophy, in all its storehouse of human remedies, has nothing like unto it. Indeed, I
am

am persuaded that mirth—a sober, well regulated mirth—is perfectly acceptable to the kind Being that made us ;—and that a man may laugh and sing, and dance too—and, after all, go to Heaven.

I never could—and I never can—nay, I positively never will, believe that we were sent into this world to go sorrowing through it. On the contrary, every object around me—the rural dance, and the rustic minstrelsy, that I behold and hear from my window, tell me that man is framed for joy. Nor shall any crack-brained Carthusian Monk,—or all the Carthusian Monks in the world,—persuade me to the contrary.

Swift says, *vive la bagatelle*. I say, *vive la joie* ; which I am sure is no *bagatelle* ;
but,

but, as I take it, a very *serious thing*, and the first of human possessions.

May your treasury, my dear friend, continue to have good store in it—and, like the *widow's cruse*, may it fail not!

At *Lyons* I expect to find some tidings of you, and from thence I will dispatch some further tidings of myself.—So in the mean time, and at all times, may God bless you.—Believe me,

I shall ever remain most truly

And affectionately your's,

L. S T E R N E.

LETTER XXVIII.

To _____

Lyons, Nov. 15.

I Have travelled here most deliciously—though I have made my journey in a *désohlégeant*, and of course alone. But when the heart is at rest, and the mind is in harmony with itself, and every subordinate feeling is well attuned, not an object offers itself to the attention but may be made to produce pleasure.—Besides, such is the character of this happy people, that you see

see a smile on every countenance, and hear the notes of joy from every tongue.—There is an old woman, at this moment, playing on the viol before my window, and a groupe of young people are dancing to it, with more appearance, and, I believe, more *reality* of pleasure, than all your brilliant assemblies at *Almack's* can boast.

I love my country as well as any of her children—and I know the solid, characteristic virtues of its people;—but they do not play the game of happiness with that attention to success which is practised and obtained here.—I shall not enter into the physical or moral difference between the two nations—but I cannot, however, help observing that, while the French possess
a gaiety

a gaiety of heart, that always weakens and sometimes baffles sorrow, the English still answer the description of the *old Frenchman*, and really continue to divert themselves *moult tristement*.

Nay, how often have I seen at a *York Assembly*, two young people dance down thirty couple, with as grave countenances as if they did it for hire, and were, after all, not sure of being paid: and here have I beheld the sun-burnt sons and daughters of labor rise from their scanty meal with not a pulse in their hearts that did not beat to pleasure;—and, with the brightest looks of satisfaction, make their wooden shoes responsive to the sound of a broken-winded hautboy.

All

All the world shall never persuade me there is not a Providence, and a gracious one too, which governs it. With every blessing under the sun we look grave, and reason ourselves into dissatisfaction; while here—with scarce any blessing *but the Sun*—*on est content de son état.*

But the kind Being who made us all, gives to each the portion of happiness, according to his wise and good pleasure; for no one—and nothing is beneath his all-providential care;—*he even tempers the wind to the shorn lamb.*

By such reflections, and under such influences, I am perverted from my purpose; for when I drew my chair to the table,

ble, and dipped my pen into the inkhorn, I breathed nothing but complaint, and it was my sole design to tell you so—for I have sent—*a la poste restante* again and again, and there is no letter from you. But though I am impatience itself to continue my journey towards the *Alps*, and cannot possibly indulge my curious spirit till I hear from you, yet such is the effect of my sympathetic nature, that I have caught all the ease and good humour of the people about me, and seem to be sitting here, in my black coat and yellow slippers, as contented as if I had not another step to take; and, God knows I have a pretty circuit to make, my friend, before I may embrace you again.

It is not, as you well know, my practice to scratch out any thing I write, or I would erase

eraze the last dozen lines; as, the very moment I had concluded them, your letter and two others arrived, and brought me every thing I could wish.—I would really linger, if I thought you would overtake me. At all events, we shall meet at *Rome*—*at Rome*—and I shall now take the wings of to-morrow morning to forward my progress thither.

I sincerely hope this paper may be thrown away upon you,—that is, I wish you may be come away before it has made its passage to England.—At all events, my dear boy, we shall meet at Rome. So till then—fare thee well:—there and every where—I shall be,

Your most faithful and affectionate,

L. S T E R N E.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXIX.

To ———.

Bond Street.

I HAVE a great mind to have done with joking, laughing, and merry making, for the rest of my days, with either man, woman, or child ; and set up for a grave, formal, see-saw character ; and dispense stupid wisdom, as I have hitherto been said to have done sensible nonsense, to my country-men and country-women.

To tell you the truth—I began this letter yesterday morning, and was interrupted

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ed in getting to the end of it, by half a dozen idle people, who called upon me to lounge and to laugh; though one of them forced me home with him to dine with his sister, whom I found to be a being of a superior order, and who has absolutely made the something like a resolution with which I began this letter, not worth the feather of the quill with which it was written.

She is, in good faith, charming beyond my powers of description; and we had such an evening, as made the cup of tea she gave me more delicious than nectar.

By the bye, she wishes very much to become acquainted with you—not, believe me, from any representations or biography of mine, but from the warm encomiums she has

has received of you from others, and those, as she says, of the first order. After all this, however, you may be sure that my testimony was not wanting.—So that, when you will give an opportunity, I shall have the honour of presenting you to kiss her hand, and add another devout worshipper at the temple of such transcendent merit.

I am really of opinion that, if there is a woman in the world formed to do you good, and to make you love her into the bargain—which, I believe, is the only way of doing you any good—this is the pre-eminent and bewitching character.—Indeed, were you to command my feeble powers to delineate the lovely being whose affections would well repay thee for all the heart-achs and disquieting apprehensions that may and will afflict thee in thy passage through life,

it

it would be this fair and excellent creature. My *Knight Errant* spirit has already told her that she is a *Dulcinea* to me—but I would most willingly take off my armour and break my spear, and resign her as an *Angel* to you.

I need not say any thing, I trust, of my affection for you; and I have, just now, some singular ideas on your subject, which kept me awake last night, when I ought to have been sound asleep—but I shall reserve them for the communication of my fire-side, or your's, as it may be; and I wish, as devoutly as ever I wished any thing in my life, that my fire was to brighten before you this very evening.

In the name of fortune,—for want of a better at the moment,—what business have
you

you to be fifty leagues from the capital, at a time when I stand so much in need of you, for your own sake ?

I hear you exclaim—whom is all this about ?—And I see you half determined to throw my letter into the fire, because you cannot find her name in it. This is all, my good friend, as it ought to be—for you may be assured that I never intended to write her name on this sheet of paper. I have told you of the divinity, and you will find the rest inscribed on the altar.

I was never more serious in my life ; so let the wheels of your chariot roll as rapidly as post-horses can make them, towards this town ; where if you come not soon, I shall be gone ; and then I know not what may become of all my *pre-*
sent

sent good intentions towards you ;—future ones, it is true, I shall have in plenty—for at all events, in all circumstances, and every where,

I am,

Most cordially,

affectionately your's,

L. S T E R N E.

LETTER

LETTER XXX.

To ———

Friday.

THESE may be piping times to you,
my dear friend, and I rejoice at it—
but they are not dancing ones to me.

You will perceive, by the manner in
which this letter is written, that if I dance
—*Holbein's* piper must be the fidler.

Since I wrote to you last, I have burst
another vessel of my lungs, and lost blood
enough

enough to pull down a very strong man : what it has done then with my meagre form, clad as it is with infirmities, may be better imagined than described.—Indeed, it is with difficulty and some intervals of repose that I can trail on my pen ; and if it were not for the anxious forwardness of *my spirits*, which aids me for a few minutes by their precious Mechanism, I should not be able to thank you at all :—I know I cannot thank you as I ought, for your four letters which have remained so long unanswered, and particularly for the last of them.—

I really thought, my good friend, that I should have seen you no more. The grim scare-crow seemed to have taken post at the foot of my bed, and I had not strength to laugh him off as I had hitherto done :—so I bowed my head in patience, without the
least

least expectation of moving it again from my pillow.

But somehow or other he has, I believe, changed his purpose for the present—and we shall, I trust, embrace once again. I can only add, that, while I live, I shall be

Most affectionately your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXI.

To ——— :

Bond Street, May 8.

I Felt the full force of an honest heart-ach on reading your last letter.—The story it contains may be placed among the most affecting relations of human calamity, and the happiest efforts of human benevolence. I happened to have it in my pocket yesterday morning when I breakfasted with Mrs. M——; and, for want of something so good of my own, I read the whole of your letter to her,—but this is not all; for, what

I

is

is more to the purpose, (that is, to the purpose of your honour) she desired to read it herself, and then she entreated me not to delay the earliest opportunity to present *you* to her breakfast table, and the mistress of it to you. I told her of the awkward distance of an hundred miles, at least, that lay between us; but I promised and vowed,—for I was obliged to do both,—that the moment I could lay hold of your arm, I would lead you to *her vestibule*.—I really begin to think I shall get some credit by you.

Love, I most readily acknowledge, is subject to violent paroxysms, as well as slow fevers; but there is so much pleasure attendant upon the passion in general, and so many amiable sympathies are connected with it; nay,—it is sometimes so suddenly, and oftentimes so easily cured, that I cannot,

not, for the life of me, pity its disasters with the same tone of commiseration, which accompanies my consolatory visits to other less ostensible sources of distress.—In the last sad separation of friends, *hope* comforts us with the prospect of an eternal reunion, and *religion* encourages the belief of it:—but in the melancholy history which you relate, I behold what has always appeared to me, to be the most affecting sight in the gloomy region of human misfortune: I mean the pale countenance of one who has seen better days, and sinks under the despair of seeing them return. The mind that is bowed down by unmerited calamity, and knows not from what point of the compass to expect any good, is in a state, over which the Angel of pity sheds all his showers—*Unable to dig, and to beg ashamed—*

what a description!—what an object for relief;— and how great the rapture to relieve it!

I do not, my dear boy,—indeed I do not—envy your feelings, for I trust that I share them; but if it were possible for me to envy you any thing that does you so much honour, and makes me love you, if possible, so much better than I did before—it is the little fabric of comfort and happiness which you have erected in the depths of misery. The whole may occupy, perhaps, but little space in this world—but, like the mustard seed, it will grow up and rear its head towards that Heaven, to which the Spirit that planted it will finally conduct you.

Robinson called upon me yesterday, to take me to dinner in *Berkeley-square*;—
and,

and, while I was arranging my drapery, I gave him your letter to read. He felt it as he ought, and not only desired me to say, every handsome thing on his part to you, but he said a great many handsome things of you himself, during dinner and after it, and drank your health. Nay, as his wine warmed him, he talked loud, and threatened to drink water—like you—the rest of his days.

But while I am relating so many fine things to flatter *your vanity*, let me, I beseech you, mention something to flatter my own;—and this is neither more or less than a very elegant silver standish, with a motto engraved upon it, which has been sent me by *Lord Spencer*. This mark of that Nobleman's good disposition towards me,

me, was displayed in a manner, which enhanced the value of the gift, and heightened my sense of the obligation. I could not thank him for it as I ought; but I wrote my acknowledgments as well as I could, and promised his Lordship that, as it was a piece of plate the *Shandy* family would value the most, it should certainly be the last they will part with.

I had another little business to communicate to you, but the postman's bell warns me to write adieu—so God bless you, and preserve you, as you are;—and this wish, by the bye, is saying no small matter in your favour; but it is addressed for, and to you, with the same truth that guides my pen in assuring you, that I am, most sincerely and cordially, your faithful friend,

L. STERNE.

LETTER XXXII.

To *Bond Street.*

THERE is a certain pliability of the affections, my dear friend, which, with all its inconveniences,—and I will acknowledge a thousand,—forms a wonderful charm in the human character.—To become a dupe to others, who are almost always worse, and, very often, more ignorant than yourself, is not only mortifying to one's pride, but frequently destructive to one's fortune. Nevertheless, there
is

is sometimes, in the very face, and, which is worse, in the mind, of suspicion, of such a detestable complexion and character, that I could never bear it; and whenever I have observed mistrust in the heart, I would never rap at the door of it, even to pay, if I could help it, a morning visit, much less to make my lodging there.

Niger est, hunc tu Romane caveto.

This sort of cullibility most certainly lays you open to the designs of knaves and rascals; and they are, alas! to be found in the hedges and highway sides, and will come in without the trouble of sending for them.

—The happy mean between mad good-nature and mean self-love, is of difficult attainment; though Mr. Pope says,—
that

that *Lord Bathurst* possessed it in an eminent degree,—and I believe it. Indeed, it is for my honour that I should believe it, as I have received much kindness, and many generous attentions from that venerable, and excellent nobleman:—as I never possessed this happy quality myself, I can only recommend it to you, without offering any instructions on a duty, of which I cannot offer myself as an example.—This is not altogether clerical,—I mean as clergymen do,—but no matter.

B——— is exactly one of these harmless, inoffensive people, who never frets or fumes, but bears all his losses with a most Christian patience, and settles the account in this manner,—that he had rather lose any thing than that benevolence of disposition,

position, which forms the happiness of his life. But how will all this end?—for you know, as I know, that when once you have won his good opinion, you may impose upon him ten times a day,—if nine did not suit your purpose. The real friends of virtue, of honour, and what is best in the human character, should form a phalanx round such a man, and preserve him from the harpy plottings of sharpers and villains.

But there is another species of cullibility that I never can be brought to pity, which arises from the continual aim to make culls of others. It is not that gentle, confidential, unsuspicious spirit, which I have already hinted to you, but an overweening, wicked, insidious disposition, which, by
being

being continually engaged in the miserable business of deceiving others, either outwits itself, or is outwitted by the very objects of its own fallacious intentions.

There is not, believe me, a more straight way to the being a dupe yourself, than the resting your hopes or pleasure *in making dupes of others.*

Cunning is not an honourable qualification; it is a kind of left-handed wisdom, which even fools can sometimes practise, and villains always make the foundation of their designs:—But, alas! how often does it betray its votaries to their dishonour, if not to their destruction.

Though an occasional stratagem may be sometimes innocent, I am ever disposed

to suspect the cause where it must be employed; for, after all, you will, I am sure, agree with me, that where artifice is not to be condemned *as a crime*, the necessity, which demands it, must be considered *as a misfortune*.

I have been led to write thus *Socratically* from the tenor of your letter; though, if my paper would allow me, I would take a frisk, and vary the scene; but I have only room to add, that I dined in *Brook-street* last Sunday, where many gracious things were said of you, not only by the old folks, but, which is better, by the *young virgins*. I went afterwards, not much to my credit, to *Argyle Buildings*, but there were no virgins there. So may God forgive me, and

MR. LAURENCE STERNE.

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and bless you,—now, and at all times.—

I remain,

Most truly and cordially,

Your's,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXIII.

To_____

Coxwold, August 19, 1766.

A MONG your Whimsicalities, my dear friend, for you have them as well as *Tristram*,—there is not one of them which possesses a more amiable tendency, than that gentle spirit of modern Romance which, hadst thou lived in days of Yore, would have made thee the veriest Knight Errant, that ever brandished a spear, or wore a vizard.

The

The very same spirit that has led thee from hence to the Bristol Fountain, for no other earthly purpose, but to let a Phthysical maiden lean upon thine arm, and receive the healing waters from thine hand, would, in a former age, have urged thee to traverse forests and fight with monsters, for the sake of some *Dulcinea* whom thou hadst never seen; or perhaps have made a *red-cross*-Knight of thee, and carried thee over lands and seas to *Palestine*.—

For to tell thee the truth, enthusiasm is in the very soul of thee:—if thou wert born to live in some other planet, I might encourage all its glowing, high-coloured vulgarities;—but in this miserable, back-biting, cheating, pimping world of ours, it will not do,—indeed, indeed it will not.—And full well do I know, nor does this
vaticination

vaticination escape me without a sigh, that it will lead thee into a thousand scrapes,—and some of them may be such, as thou wilt not easily get out of;—and should the fortunes of thine house be shaken by any of them,—with all thy pleasant enjoyments;—what then? you may say; nay I think I hear you say so,—why thy friends will then lose thee.

For if foul fortune should take thy stately palfrey, with all its gay and gilded trappings from beneath thee; or if, while thou art sleeping by moon-light beneath a tree,—it should escape from thee, and find another master;—or if the miserable Banditti of the world should plunder thee,—I know full well that we should see thee no more;—for thou wouldst then find out some

distant cell, and become an Hermit; and endeavour to persuade thyself not to regret the separation from those friends, who will ever regret their separation from thee.

This enthusiastic spirit is in itself a good spirit;—but there is no spirit whatever,—no, not a *termagant* spirit, that requires a more active restraint, or a more discreet regulation.

And so we will go next spring, if you please, to the fountain of *Vauclusa*, and think of *Petrarch*, and, which is better, apostrophise his *Laura*.—By that time, I have reason to think my wife will be there, who, by the bye, is not *Laura*;—but my poor dear *Lydia* will be with her, and she is more than a *Laura* to her fond father.

Answer

Answer me on these things, and may
God bless you.—

I remain,

With the most cordial truth,

Your affectionate

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXIV.

To _____

Sunday Evening.

THERE is a certain kind of offence which a man may,—nay, which he ought to forgive:—But such is the jealous honour of the world, that there is a sort of injury, commonly called an affront, which, if it proceeds from a certain line of character, must be revenged.—But let me entreat thee to remember that hardness of heart is not worth thine anger, and would disgrace

disgrace thy vengeance.—To turn upon a man who possesses it, would not, like *Saint Paul*, be kicking against the pricks,—but, which is far worse, against a flint.—Thou didst right, therefore, my dear boy,—in letting the matter pass as thou hast done.

As far as my observation has reached, and the circle of it is by no means, a narrow one—an hard heart is always a cowardly heart.—Generosity and courage are associate virtues; and the character which possesses the former, must, in the nature of mental arrangements, be adorned with the latter.

If I perceive a man to be capable of doing a mean action,—if I see him imperious and tyrannical; if he takes advantage of
the

the weak to oppress, or of the poor to grind, or of the downcast to insult,—or is continually on the hunt after excuses not to do what he ought,—I determine such a man, though he may have fought fifty duels, to be a coward.—It is by no means a proof that a man is brave because he does not refuse to fight;—for we all know that cowards have fought, nay,—that cowards have conquered,—but a coward never performed a generous or a noble action:—and thou hast my authority to say,—and thou mightest find a worse, that a hard-hearted character never was a brave one. I say, thou mayst justly call such a man a coward,—and, if he should be spirited into a resentment of the words—fear him not.—*Tristram* shall brighten his armour, and scour the rust from off his spear, and aid thee in the combat.

And

And now let me ask thee, my good friend, how it happens that thy fancy has of late taken to the Dormitory.—I thought the very names of *Petrarch* and *Laura*, and the enchanting scene of *Vaucluse's* fountain, which is such a classical spot to all tender minds, must have inspired thee with a flow of sentiment, that would have meandered through every page of thy last letter;—but instead of it, here have I been saluted with a string, of stiff, starched notions of honour, and God knows what—that you could have found no where but in conversing with the young Lords in great periwigs,—and the old Ladies in bouncing fardingals,—who have so long inhabited ———'s long, long Gallery.

However, when you are tired of such company, and stalking about upon a mat-

ted floor, you may come here and contemplate the Autumn leaf; and relax yourself with looking at me while I prepare another volume or two to lessen the spleen of a splenetic world.—For with all its faults, I am willing to do it that good at least,—if it will let me;—and, if it will not, I shall leave you to pity it. So fare thee well,—and God bless you.

I remain,

Thine most affectionate,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXV.

To Lady ——— C ——— H ———

Saturday Noon.

HERE am I now actually at my writing table,—shall I divulge the secret?—in something between the fortieth and forty-fifth year of my life,—I shall leave your Ladyship, if you please, to imagine all the rest:—and, in this advancing state of my age, am I to address myself to all those charms which are composed by the happiest combination of youth and beauty.—

But

But if you should consider this as a presumption, I will quit those beauties which belong only to early life, and make my application to qualities, which are of every period, and possess that lengthened charm, which makes one overlook the wrinkles of age, and turns the hoary hair into Auburn Tresses. That you will always possess the one as you now do the other, I have heard acknowledged wherever I have heard your name mentioned: nor do I remember that your praise was ever accompanied with the exception of a single *but*—from any of the many various forms and shapes, which envy plants in every corner to snarl at excellence.

But while your Ladyship, by a kind of miraculous power, can subdue envy with

K

respect

respect to yourself,—you may sometimes, without meaning it, encourage its attacks upon others.—For my part, nothing can be more certain than that I shall be envied with a vengeance, when it is known with what a gracious condescension you have indulged my request: but envy, on such an occasion, will add to my laurels instead of withering them:—it is like the scar of glory; and, I am as proud of the one, as the patriot hero has reason to be of the other.

To confine myself, however, to the purpose of this paper.

Permit me to thank your Ladyship most cordially, for permitting me to solicit the honour of your protection—as for attempting

ing to thank you for having granted it, that is not in my power ; both my pen and my lips find it impossible to obey the impulse of my heart on the occasion.—Perhaps the time may come, when some of the *Shandy* family may possess a sufficient eloquence, to offer you that homage, which is very devoutly felt, but cannot be adequately expressed,—indeed it cannot, by

Your Ladyship's most faithful,
and obedient humble servant,

L. STERNE.

LETTER XXXVI.

To _____

*Wednesday,—**past 9 at Night—and not very well.*

THAT woman is a timid animal, I am most ready, my dear friend, to acknowledge,—but, like other timid animals, is more dangerous, in certain situations, than those who possess a greater degree of natural courage.—I would, therefore, counsel thee for this, among a thousand other reasons, never to make a woman thine enemy, if thou canst possibly help it.—Not that

I

I suspect

I suspect thee to be capable of an uncourteous act, to any of the lovelier sex,—on the contrary, I think thee qualified, and disposed too, beyond most men I ever knew, to charm them, and do them good: and it is, perhaps, on that, as much as any other account, that I warn thee against giving them offence.—For I have more than once observed, and mentioned with some concern, a propensity in thy character to collect thy warm affections in one particular circle, and to be careless of, which, as it relates to women, is the same thing as to be ungracious to those, who are not included in it.

There is something amiable,—nay, there may be something noble in the principle of such a conduct; but it is too refined for
a world

a world like our's; in which, short as life is, we may easily live long enough, to find the inconvenience and distress of it. He who attaches himself entirely to one object—or even to a few,—may, from ingratitude, caprice, or death, be soon left alone: and he will come with an ill-grace, when necessity compels him, to seek for kindness and society, where he formerly appeared to disdain both.

If a small cohort of friends could be certain of continuing together, till they all sunk, into one common grave, your present theory might form not only a gallant, and a pleasant, but a practicable system; this, however, my dear fellow, cannot be, and, as for living alone when all our friends are gone, it is neither more, or less, than making life a living tomb, which,

which, in my mind, is far,—far worse, than a dead one.

But to return to my subject.

Woman is a timid animal,—and, therefore, I trust and am sure thy generous nature, laying aside every other consideration, will never do any thing designedly to distress it.—Indeed, it does not appear to me, that there can be a possible situation, which will justify any kind of inattention to the sex, that may give them pain.—For be assured, and I will rest my experience of woman kind, of which I am not a little proud, on the opinion, that the passion for any individual of the sex, whatever her perfections may be, which makes thee relax in thy gracious behaviour to the rest, will never

never promote thy real happiness :—it may afford thee a certain season, though I believe a very short one, of tumultuous rapture, and then thou wilt awake from thy delirium, to all the grievances of a fretful spirit,

Women look at least for attentions ;—they consider them as an inherent birth-right, given to their sex by the laws of polished society ; and when they are deprived of them, they most certainly have a right to complain—and will be, one and all, disposed to practise that revenge, which is not, by any means, to be treated with contempt. It would be very unpleasant for me to hear in any female society, that my friend was a strange, eccentric, singular, unpleasant character ;—and I rather think that he himself would not be pleased to find,
that

that such a description was given, and believed of him.—I do not mean to urge,—indeed, I well know you cannot suspect me of so gross an error,—that the same regard is to be equally dealt to all: this is far from being my system;—*but I affirm on the other hand—that all are not to be disregarded for one*; for it will seldom happen, that the affection of that one, will recompense thee for the enmity of all the rest.—Love one, if you please, and as much as you please—but, be gracious to all.

Affection may, surely, conduct thee through an avenue of women, to her who possesses thy heart, without tearing the flounces of any of their petticoats. The displaying courtesy to all whom you meet, will delay you very little in your way, to

the arms of her whom you love—and, if I mistake not, will attune your sensibilities, to the higher enjoyment of the raptures you will find there.

We have all of us, enemies enough, my good friend, from the inevitable course of human events, without our encreasing the number by so strange, and unprofitable conduct, as that of neglecting any of the most trifling offices of familiar life.

Besides,—to come more home to thine heart,—let me observe to thee,—that charity, and humanity, which, by the bye, are one, and the same thing, are said to be the foundation of those qualities, which form what is called a well-bred man.—If, therefore, you should, on any account,
get

get into the habit of neglecting the latter, —you may stand more than a chance of its being said, that you do not possess the former, which, you know to be the brightest jewel in the human character.—And this I am certain would wound thee in thy very soul.

—My dear boy, neglect not these, and other things, which, thou mayst call, little things;—for little things, believe me, are, oftentimes, of great importance, in the arrangements of life.

You have been frequently pleased to tell me, as a matter of praise, that, in my descriptions, I am natural to a nicety,—and, when I tell of picking up an handkerchief, or wiping a tear from the cheek
of

of a distressed damsel, with a white one—
or the sticking a pin into a pincushion,
—and such things, I am far superior to
any other writer.—Apply then, I beseech
thee, this observation to thyself, and give
me an opportunity of retorting the eulogi-
um upon thee. This, is the sincere wish
of thy friend.

So may God bless thee, and direct the
best feelings of thy heart, to the best pur-
poses of thy life.

I am,

Your's, most affectionately,

L. STERNE.

The postman's bell tells me I have not
time to read what I have written; but I will
trust to both our hearts, that there is nothing
which either ought to be ashamed of.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVII.

To Mrs V——

Monday Morn.

WHEN all the croud, my fair lady, was hurried into the gardens, to hear the musick of squibs and crackers—and to see the air illuminated by rockets, and balloons,—I was flattered, exquisitely flattered, to find you contented to saunter lackadayfically with me, round an exhausted Ranelagh, and give me your gentle, amiable, elegant sentiments, in a tone of voice, that was originally intended for a Cherub. How you got it I know not—nor is it my business to enquire; I am ever rejoiced

rejoiced to find, any emanation of the other world, in any corner of this, be it where it may;—but particularly, when it proceeds through any female organ,—where the effect must be more powerful, because it is always most delicious.

Now after this little emanation of my spirit, which may not be quite so celestial as it ought, I trust you will not think me ungracious, in desiring you to excuse my promised duties, at your drawing-room this evening. The truth is,—my cough has seized me so violently by the throat, that, though I could hear you sing, I should not be able, to tell you the effects, of your music, upon my heart. Indeed, —I can scarce produce a whisper, loud enough, to make the servant bring my gruel.

I have

I have now been so long acquainted with this crazy frame of mine, that I know all its tricks,—and, I foresee, that I have a week's indulgence, at least, to bestow upon it.—However, on Sunday next, I trust,—I may be-cassock myself, in my cloak, and bechaired to your warm cabinet, where, I hope to possess voice enough, to assure you, of the sincere esteem, and admiration, I feel for you,—whether I can tell you so, or no. Colds, and coughs, and catarrhs, may tie up the tongue, but the heart is above the little inconveniences, of its prison house, and will one day escape from them all. 'Till that period, I shall beg leave to remain, with great truth,

Your most faithful,

And obedient, humble servant,

L. STERNE.

LETTER

LETTER XXXVIII.

To ———

Sunday Evening.

THE poor in spirit, and the poor in purse, with nine out of ten,—nay, with ninety-nine, in an hundred of the world, are so alike, that, by practising the virtues of the former, a man generally gets, all the credit, or rather discredit of the latter.

Here are very few, my friend, who have that nice insight into characters, as to be able to discern the various, but approaching shades, that distinguish them from each

each other—and, sorry am I to say it, but, there are still fewer, who have the humanity to make them employ their discernment, where it ought to be employed, in favour of the heart.

This moderation of temper, which is always associated to sterling merit, is made to win the love of the few, but is too apt, at the same time, to be not only the dupe, but the contempt of the many. He, who comes not forward with his pretensions, is either supposed to possess none,—or to be prevented by some awkward, or disgraceful circumstances, from offering them.—The ignorant, the upstart, and the assuming will, not be made to believe, that the humble can have merit.—As they themselves wear, the tinsel suit of tawdry qualifications, upon their backs, they look
no.

no further for the qualities of others—
Which, by the bye, is natural enough.

The wicked, and the knavish, will not suppose, that a man on the score of conscience, or virtue, can be such an idiot, as to practise submission, and keep back brilliant talents from exercise, because he cannot enlist them in an honest cause;—or, that when he is employing them in an humble way,—it is not with some design of artifice, or from some motive that is base;—so that the modest, diffident, and Christian character, stands but little chance of what is called good fortune in the world. —Indeed, Christianly speaking, there is no great promise made to it, in this petty circle of time;—Such virtues are to look, to more durable honours, when this world is faded away,—and it is their consolation
and

and their delight, here, that such a reward awaits them. Alas,—without this hope, how could the good bear as they do, the thousand untoward circumstances, that are continually pressing upon them,—and, chasing away the smile from the cheeks, and placing tears in their stead.

But I am interrupted,—or I believe,—instead of a letter—you would have had a sermon; but it is Sunday evening,—and therefore with,—a God bless you,—I conclude myself,

Your affectionate—

L. STERNE.

LETTER

L E T T E R XXXIX.

To_____

Saturday Evening.

I HAVE had, my friend, another, attack, and though I am, in a great measure recovered, it has hinted to me one thing, at least, which is,—that if I am rash enough to risk the Winter in London, I shall never see another Spring.*

But be that as it may,—as my family is now in England, and as I have my sentimental journey;—which, I think with you, will be the most popular of my works, to
give

* In the very beginning of the following Spring, he died at his lodgings in Bond-street.

give to the world:—I know not how it will be possible for me, to run so counter to my interest, my affections, and my vanity—as to set my face southward before March,—and I think if I get to that period, I may bid the scare-crow, defiance, for another seven, or eight months,—and then I may leave him in the fogs, and go where, as he so often followed me in vain, he will not follow me again. And this idea cheers my spirit—not, believe me, that I am uneasy about death, as death;—but, that I think, for a dozen years to come—I could make a very tolerable, good use of life.

But be that as it pleases God.

Besides I have promised your,—and sure I may add, my charming friend, Mrs. V—, to pay her a visit in Ireland,—which,—I mean that you should do with me.

It

It is not that you introduced me to her acquaintance,—which is something ; it is not her enchanting voice which, humanly speaking may be more,—nor that she has come herself, in the form of a pitying angel, and made my Tifan for me during my illness,—and played at picquet with me, in order to prevent my attempt to talk, as she was told it would do me harm ;—which is most of all—that makes me love her so much as I do ;—but it is a mind attuned to every virtue, and a nature of the first order,—beaming through a form of the first beauty. In my life did I never see any thing—so truly graceful as she is, nor had I an idea, 'till I saw her—that grace could be so perfect in all its parts, and so suited to all the higher ordinances of the first life, from the superintending impulse of the mind. For I will answer for it, that education

cation, though called forth to the utmost exertions, has played a very subordinate part, in the composition of her character. All its best efforts are—as it were—in the back ground, or rather are lost in the general mass of those qualities, which predominate over all her accessory accomplishments.

In short if I had ever so great an inclination to cross the gulph, while such a woman beckoned me to stay,—I could not depart.

The world, however has absolutely killed me, and should such a report have reached you, I know full well, that it would have grieved you sorely,—and I wish you not to shed a tear for me in vain.—That you will drop more than one over

thy friend Yorick, when he is dead, soothes him while he is yet alive ;—but I trust that, though there may be something in my death, whenever it happens,—to distress you, there will, be something, also in the remembrance of me, to comfort you, when I am laid beneath the marble.

But why do I talk of marble,—I should say beneath the sod.

For cover my head with a turf, or a stone,

'Twill be all one—

'Twill be all one.

Till then, at least, I shall be, with great truth.

Your most affectionate,

L. STERNE.



F I N I S.

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